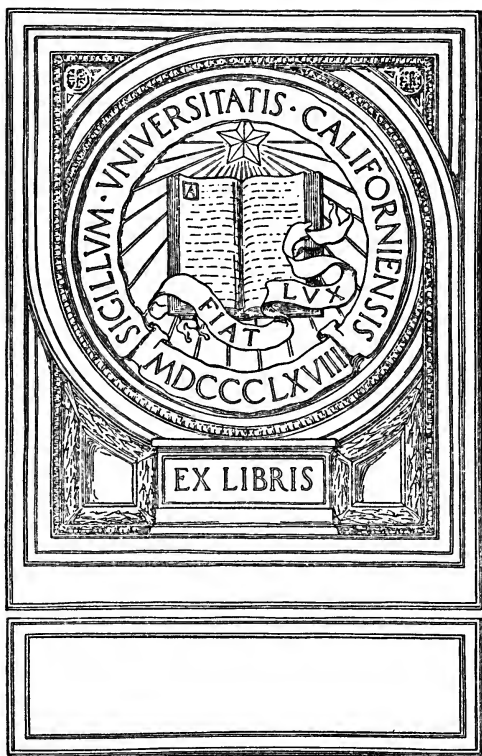


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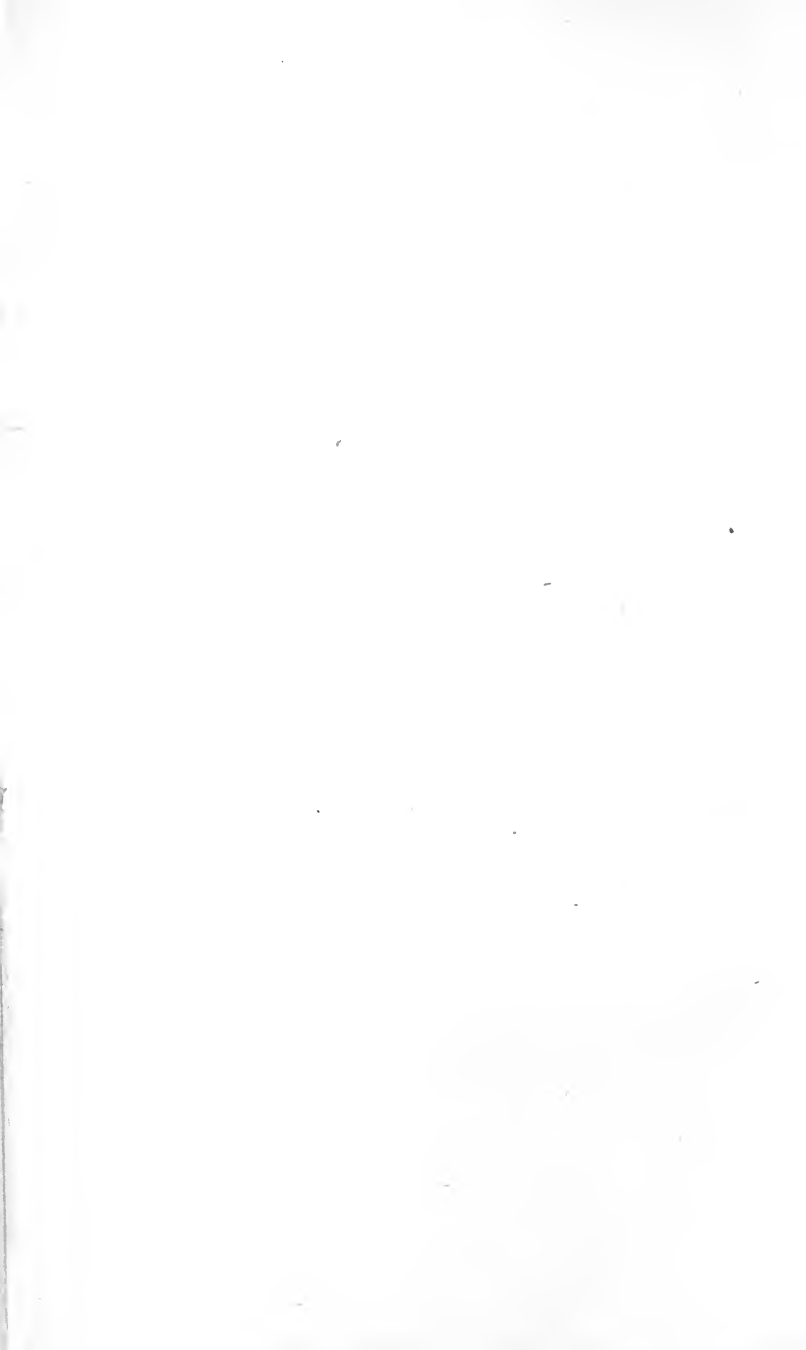
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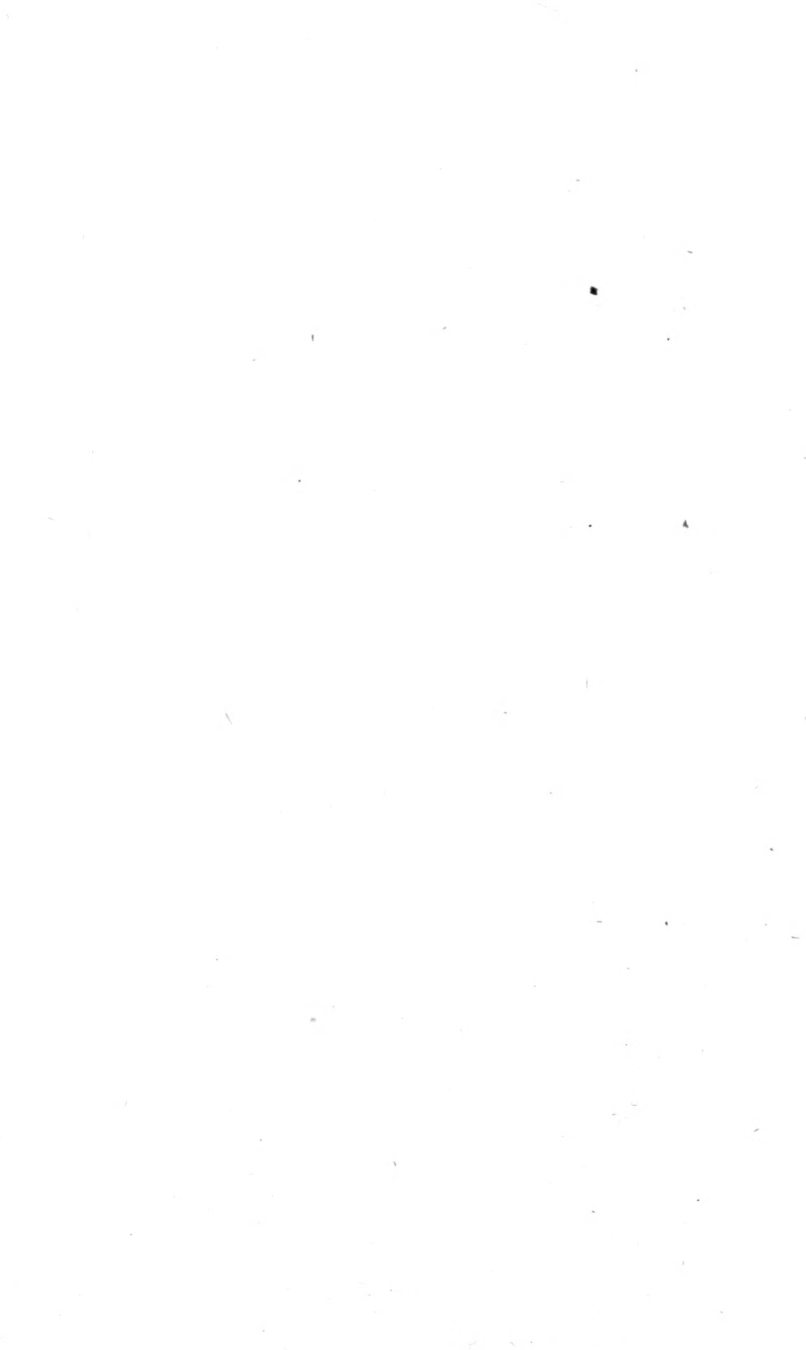
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LEGENDS
OF
LOVE AND CHIVALRY.

The Chevaliers of France.



THE
CHEVALIERS OF FRANCE

FROM

THE CRUSADERS TO THE MARECHALS OF LOUIS XIV.

BY

HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT,

AUTHOR OF "THE CAVALIERS OF ENGLAND"—"THE KNIGHTS OF ENGLAND, FRANCE,
AND SCOTLAND"—"THE PURITANS OF NEW ENGLAND"—"MARMADUKE WYVIL," ETC.



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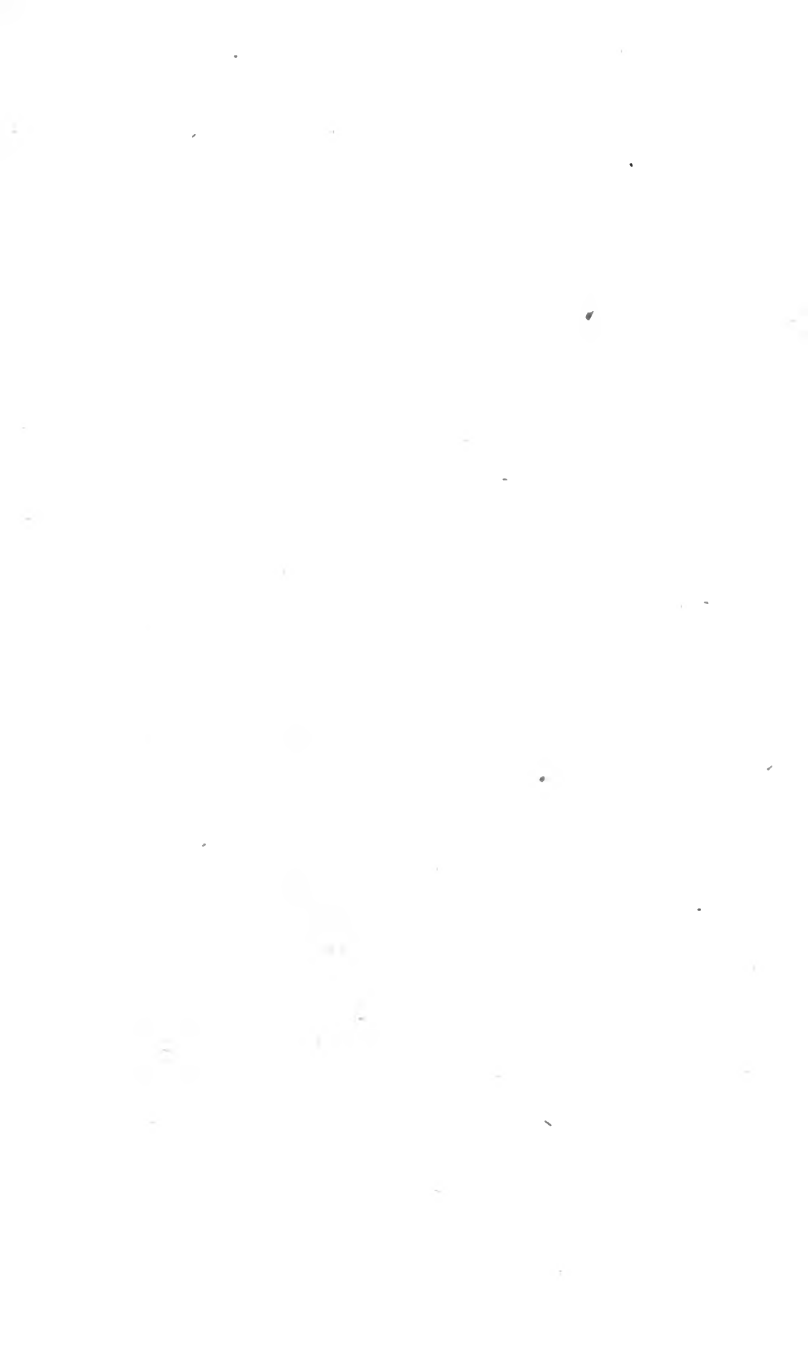
1853

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SIR HUGUES DE COUCY ;

A Chivalric Legend of the Low Countries.

1200.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROUTIER.

IT wanted an hour or two perhaps of sunset, on a lowering September evening, when a small group of men and horses were assembled on an elevated knoll, commanding an extensive view of the country, which at that period was mostly covered by unbroken forest ; although a large and seemingly much-travelled road could be seen at intervals, for a distance of many miles, with here and there the dark square outlines of a church-tower, or of some castellated mansion, distinctly visible above the trees, among which the causeway wandered devious. All else was wild and savage. The huge beech forest, a portion of the great wood of Ardennes, which, little circumscribed in that day of its limits as described by the great Roman, swept off in solid masses to the eastward, to join beyond the Rhine the vaster solitudes of the Hercynian forest—clothed every hill and hollow for many a league around with dense and shadowy woodland. Except the line of road, and the

scattered buildings, and here and there a wreath of smoke curling up blue and ghostly in the distance, above some sylvan hamlet or small borough town, nothing could be discovered even to the misty, ill-defined horizon, but one vast sea of waving branches, now tinged with the first solemn tints of autumn. The knoll, which had been occupied by the party grouped around its summit as a post of observation, was admirably adapted for that purpose ; rising abruptly from the top of a gentle hill, to the height of at least two hundred feet, and being the only elevation of the kind for many a league of distance. The top of it was bare, and covered with thin grass sprouting up scantily from the crevices of the sandstone rock which composed it, but the sides were well clothed with luxuriant coppice, high enough to conceal the head of the tallest man, and very intricate and tangled. Immediately around its base the high-road wheeled, after ascending the gentle slope on the eastern side, and was soon lost to view in a deep-wooded valley to the westward.

The group which occupied this station consisted of four armed men with their horses ; beside a monk, as he appeared from his gray frock and tonsured head, mounted upon a sleek, well-favored mule. The principal personage of the party was one well meriting from his appearance, for it was singular in the extreme, a brief description. He was above six feet in height, and gaunt almost to meagerness, but with extremely broad, square shoulders, and arms of disproportionate length terminating in huge, bony hands. His face was even more remarkable than his person, and his accoutrements, and dress perhaps exceeded both. He had a very high but narrow forehead, ploughed deeply by the lines of fierce and fiery passions. His deep set eye (for he had but one, the left having been utterly destroyed by a wound, the scar of which severing the eyebrow near the insertion of the nose, seamed his whole

cheek, and might be traced by a white line far through the thick and matted beard which clothed his chin jaw), gleamed out with a sinister and lurid glare from beneath his shaggy, overhanging brow. His nose had been originally of the keenest aquiline, high, thin, and well shaped; but its bridge had been broken years before by a cross-cut which had completely severed it, and which, though skilfully healed, had left a strange and disfiguring depression. His mouth, as far as could be judged from the vast crop of mustache and beard which covered all the lower half of his countenance with a tangled mass of red, grizzled hair, was well cut, bold, and decided, but the whole aspect of the man was strangely repulsive and disgusting. There was an air of reckless and undaunted courage, it is true, stamped on his scarred and weather-beaten features; but it was their sole redeeming trait, and it, too, was so mixed up and blended with effrontery, and pride, and cruelty, and brute licentiousness, that it was lost and obscured, except when it would flash out at rare intervals in time of deadly peril, and banish for a moment by its brightness the clouds of baser passions. His dress had been in the first instance, a splendid suit of complete tilting armor of the most ponderous description; but many parts of it had been lost or broken, and replaced by others of inferior quality and construction. Thus while he still retained the corslet and plastron with the gorget and vant braces of fluted Milan steel, painted to suit the caprice of the wearer, of a deep blood-red, his cuishes, and the splents which protected his leg from the knee downward, were of plain Flemish iron, once brightly polished, but now sordid and defaced with rust, and recent blood-stains. His head was covered by a heavy casque, with cervelliere and avantaille of steel, of a different construction from his breastplate, but like it lacquered with dark crimson, and throwing a dreadful and unnatural reflection from its raised visor over a face which needed

no additions to render it in the last degree appalling. He had an iron chain across his shoulders instead of a baldric, to which was attached a long two-edged straight broad-sword. The belt about his waist was filled with knives and daggers of every shape and size ; and pitched into the ground beside his horse, a powerful and active charger, with a steel demipique and an axe slung at the saddlebow, but unencumbered by defensive armor, stood his long lance with its steel head and crimson pennon. He had gauntlets on his hands, and spurs upon his heels, but they were not the gilded spurs of knighthood, nor was there any plume or crest on his burgonet, nor any bearings on the plain, blood-red shield which hung about his neck. The other three armed persons, who stood at little way aloof, were ordinary men-at-arms of the period, ruffianly-looking fellows enough, and with none of that gallant and spirited demeanor which marked the chivalric soldier of the day. They were powerful athletic men, however, strongly and completely, though variously, armed one with the corslet and steel bonnet, brassards and taslets, of a well-appointed trooper, one with the hauberk and mail hose which were becoming at that time somewhat obsolete -- and the third in a brigantine or shirt of light chain armor on the body, his limbs protected by the usual defences of plate, and his head by a stout iron morion. They all wore broad-swords and long lances, and several daggers in their belts ; beside which they had each a long bow and a sheaf of arrows at his back. Their horses were stout, active animals, in good condition, though somewhat low in flesh, and the whole appearance of both men and beasts, although decidedly irregular, was soldier-like and serviceable. The priest who sat upon his mule, chatting sociably with the leader of the party, was a round oily-looking little figure, with a soft, sneering smile and a twinkle of marvellous shrewdness in his quick, dark eye ; altogether, however, he was as unclerical

looking a personage as ever drew a cowl over a tonsored head, and it is probable at least, that had his garment been subjected to a close scrutiny, some most unpriest-like appendages might there have been encountered.

"Well, priest—well! well!" said the red leader, interrupting him impatiently, in the middle of a prolix description, "but what said Talebard?"

"Talebard Talebardin," answered the little monk, pompously, "sent greeting to the Rouge Batard, and prayed that he would give him the rencontre, with as many men and horses as he can make, at the stone cross in the backwood near Braine-la-Leud, on the third morning. It seems he hath got tidings of a strong castle, weakly guarded, with a fair châtelaine within, and store of wealth to boot. Her lord hath ridden forth to join John Lackland at Mirepoix!"

"By God's head, and I will," returned the other, "and there is little time enough to spare. The third morning—may the fiend else receive me!—is to-morrow. Ho! Jean Lenoir draw your belt tight, and mount your trotting gelding, and ride for life to Wavre on the Dyle, Bras-de-fer must be there, ere this, with thirty lances—spare not for spurring, and bid him bring his men up with all speed, and meet me at the broken bridge! You know the place—begone! I look for you ere midnight."

"But my fair son and penitent," interposed the monk, "how, if we spare Lenoir, shall we be able to deal with the goodly company of merchants, and win the pretty demoiselles I told you of, and the rich sumpter mules? we shall be but three men-at-arms, and they have four armed serving-men!"

"Jean *must* go, monk," the other answered sharply, "Jean must go, and forthwith, by God! but he shall leave his bow and shafts with you, and you shall strip the gray frock off, and

don the cold iron, as you have done before!—but were the demoiselles so lovely?”

“Else may I never more kiss ruby lips, or drain a foaming flagon,” answered the worthy monk, stripping off, as he spoke, his gray frock, and showing himself dressed in a suit of close-fitting chamois leather, with a light jazeran, or coat-of-mail, covering all his body, and a belt round his waist, well stored with poniards and stilettoes. In a moment or two he had rolled up his clerical dress, and deposited it in a little wallet fastened to the crupper of his saddle; from which, after a moment’s fumbling, he brought out a strong pothelmed of black iron. With this he speedily covered his shaven crown, and taking the bow and quiver, which the trooper resigned to him as he spurred his horse down the side of the hill appeared in a style far more suitable to his real profession than he had done before the alteration of his dress.

Scarcely had he finished his preparations, before, casting his eye down the road to the eastward, he exclaimed: “Now, by the good saint Martin!—here come the knaves. Look here, Messire! here, over that big chestnut, you may perceive the fluttering of their garments down in the valley of the stream! We have no time to spare—they will be here within ten minutes.”

“Right, by our lady! Right monk!” cried the Rouge Batard, “and for your tidings you shall choose you a paramour, as soon as I am served.”

“Not so, by God!” interrupted one of the others, “it is my turn this bout—the unfrocked priest gets ever in the luck on’t. When we look Ferté-sous-jouarre, last Whitsuntide, the brightest eye and the rosiest cheek of the lot fell to our confrere Benedict!”

“Look sharp, lad—look sharp, André,” returned the chief, with a sinister glare of his single eye, and a malignant sneer,

“lest instead of red lips, and white arms to clasp your neck, you find a hempen knot to grace it, for by the God that made you, dispute one other word of mine, and you shall swing for it! To horse! to horse!” he added, seeing that his reproof was effectual, and that no further admonitions were required. “You, monk, lead, André and Le Balafre down to the thicket just below the angle of the road at the hill foot. The moment they come, give them a flight of arrows, and see you make sure of the men-at-arms. Shoot each into the face, under the eyeball, if you may; and then charge, sword in hand, and shout our war-cry. I will be with you on the word. Away!—be steady, sure, and silent!”

Not a word more was needed; the priest and his companions scrambled down into the road, and rode off as quickly as was consistent with complete silence, while he who was called the Rouge Batard led his horse slowly down the side of the steep knoll; and, having reached the road just as his followers disappeared round an abrupt turn of the causeway, tightened his girths carefully, and sprang into the saddle without putting hand to mane, or foot to stirrup, his horse standing motionless all the while as a carved statue. Settling himself firmly in his demipique, he lowered the visor over his hideous features, loosened his broadsword in its scabbard, and, seeing that the battle-axe which was suspended at the saddle-bow was ready to his grasp, laid his long lance into its rest, and, keeping the point elevated, walked his horse gently down the sandy road.

His seat was firm and graceful; his hand light, delicate, and easy; and as the noble animal which bore him curvetted down the gentle slope, despite the singular color of his harness, its want of complete uniformity and neatness, and the ruffianism of his whole appearance, it could not be denied that he was an accomplished horseman, and altogether a showy, martial-looking soldier.

In a few moments he reached the spot where he had placed his ambuscade, and halted. It was indeed a place adapted for the purpose—the road, which here was perfectly level, ran between almost impervious thickets of hazel, ash, and alders, much interfaced with creepers and wild briars; and was overhung with timber-trees, so that at noonday it was ever twilight there; and in the early evening, profound darkness. The causeway at this point turned suddenly, directly at right angles, so that of two parties travelling in opposite directions, neither could see or suspect the approach of the other till they were in close contact; and here, well knowing that his men lay in the thicket close before him, the Routier halted, with his lance in the rest, and eye, ear, heart, on the alert, ready to dash in on the travellers at the first signal of the robber-priest. His horse, endowed as it would seem with an instinctive knowledge of what was in the wind, did not so much as champ its bits, much less paw up the ground, or neigh, or whinny. Not a sound was to be heard in the wooded defile except the hoarse cooing of a distant wood pigeon, the wild, laughter-like scream of the green-headed woodpecker, and the tinkling gurgle of a little rivulet which crossed the road some fifty yards below. ●

The company which was approaching, and which had been accurately reconnoitred by the priest during their noontide halt at the little village of Merk-Braine, consisted of no less than twelve individuals, beside a long train of sumpter mules loaded with costly merchandise. First rode, well mounted on stout, black, Flemish horses, four of the ordinary armed servants or retainers of the day, dressed in strong doublets of buff-leather, with morions and breastplates, and heavy halberds in their hands, and long swords girded on their thighs. Close upon these came three persons, the principals evidently of the party, riding abreast; and as it would seem engaged in earnest conversation. He on the right hand side was a tall, portly

figure, with a broad brow and handsome features ; but his hair was already tinged with many a streak of gray, and the deep lines of thought and care upon his cheek and forehead told as distinctly as words could have done, that he had spent long years amid the toils and trials of the world ; and that two thirds at least of his mortal course had been run through whether for good or evil. Next to him, curbing lightly a beautiful Spanish jennet, there rode as lovely a girl as ever man's eyes looked upon. Still in her early youth, there was no stain, no blight of sin or passion on her sweet innocent features ; her full, black eye danced with an eloquent and lightsome mirth, and there was a continual smile on her ripe, ruby lips ; her form was tall and slender, yet exquisitely rounded in all its flowing outlines ; and so symmetrically full, that her young, glowing bust might have been chosen for a sculptor's model. As near to her upon the left as he could guide his eager horse, hanging on every word she uttered as though his soul were balanced on the low, soft sound, and gazing into her eyes with an impassioned, earnest tenderness, was a fine, noble looking youth of twenty-five or twenty-six years ; handsomely clad in a pourpoint of morone colored velvet, with a rapier at his side, and a richly-mounted poniard in his girdle. These were again followed by two serving-women, fair, buxom-looking lasses, with the dark eyes and rich complexions of the sunny south, and an old steward, or major-domo, riding unarmed beside them. The train was brought up by two common grooms, or serving-men, without any weapons, either offensive or defensive, driving a string of laden mules, the whole forming the retinue, as the quick eye of the Routier's emissary had not failed to detect, of a rich Fleming merchant, travelling with his family and chattels toward the capital of France.

Just as they neared the lurking-place of the banditti, the fair girl raised her eyes to the fast darkening heaven, and a

slight shiver running through her graceful form, "Uncle," she said, addressing the elder rider, "I would we were at our halting-place for the night. I know not why it is—for never did I feel aught like it before—but there comes over me a secret dread and horror, as I look out into these dreary woods, and see the shadows of approaching night darkening the giant trees. Is there no peril here?"

"None, my girl," replied the portly burgher, "no peril, or I would not have exposed you to it. That fierce marauder, Talebard Talebardin, as he calls himself, and his more barbarous associate, the Red Bastard, have marched away, as I learned beyond all doubt, ere we crossed the frontier, to join the bad king John, at Mirepoix, where he is even now in arms against his brother's son. And the great Philip, as I hear, is hurrying hitherward with such a train of bannerets and barons as has made all the roads secure as the streets of Paris. But we will trot on, for the night is darkening, and we have four leagues yet to traverse ere we reach Braine-la—God of heaven! what have we here!"

His last words were caused by a fierce and discordant yell from the thicket, accompanied by the simultaneous twang of three bowstrings, and the deadly whistling of the gray goose shafts; and almost instantly—before, indeed, the words had well left his lips—three of the four men-at-arms fell headlong to the earth, each shot in the face with a barbed arrow, and, after a few seconds' struggle, lay cold and senseless as the clods around them. The remaining trooper set spurs to his horse, and drove furiously forward, accompanied by the chargers of his slain companions, which, freed from all restraint and mad with terror, tossing their heads aloft, and jerking out their heels, dashed diverse into the deep forest.

What has occupied many lines to relate, occurred almost with the speed of light; and, while the long ear-piercing shriek

yet quivered on the lips of Marguerite Beaufroy, her uncle snatched her bridle-rein, and, putting spurs to his own horse, struck into a furious gallop, crying, "Ride, ride! for life! for life! we are waylaid—God aid us!" But as he did so, from the thicket forth charged Le Balafré and his companion, followed by the pretended monk. Cutting into the middle of the train they separated the younger merchant from his fair cousin and his father, rode down the old steward, and one attacking the youth, sword in hand, while the others coolly cut down and stabbed the unarmed servitors, were masters of the field in five minutes' space. For a moment or more it seemed as though the first fugitives were about to escape; for they had already interposed a considerable space between themselves and the ruffians, and were just wheeling round the angle of the wood, when, full in front rose the appalling war-cry, well known by fame through every province of fair France, "*Ha! ha! Saint Diable pour le Rouge Batard!*"—and as the awful sound smote on the ears of the trembling voyagers, a scene of no less terror presented itself to their eyes, the fearful form of the Red Routier charging in full career against their servant, who scarce had power to wield his halberd, so utterly had terror overcome his heart and palsied his strong arm. One instant—one loud thundering crash, with a wild cry of mortal anguish ringing above the clang and clatter—and the short strife was over. Man and horse rolled in the dust, one to rise no more, and still with lance unbroken and in rest, its point and pennon reeking with the hot life-blood, the Rouge Batard came on. But as he came, he saw that all the strife was over, excepting the protracted struggle between La Balafré and the young lover. He jerked his lance up quickly, when its head was within a foot of the elder merchant's breast; and curbed his charger up so suddenly that he stood motionless, thrown almost on his haunches, scarce a yard distant from the Spanish jennet of the unhappy

Marguerite. "Hold your hands!—all!" he shouted, "hear you me not, La Balafré? Hold your hands, man! And you Sir Fool, down with your silly sword, before worse come of it! Sweet lady, I salute you," he continued, "by God but thou art wondrous fair, and worthy to be, as thou shalt, ere long, the world-famed mistress of Le Rouge Batard. You sirs," he went on speaking very rapidly, addressing the merchants, "down from your horses, on the instant! Point out to these good men the costliest and least bulky of your wares, yield up your purses and your jewels, and, seeing we have lost no blood, we will be merciful to day, and suffer you to go at large, reserving to ourselves your demoiselles, whom, by the spirit of thunder, we will console right worthily."

"That thou shalt never do, dog!" cried the young man, aiming with the words a tremendous blow at the head of the Routier. Sparks of fire flashed from the dented casque of the Red Bastard, and his head was bent forward almost to the saddle-bow; but ere his bold assailant could repeat the blow he had set spurs to his charger, and, letting fall his own lance, seized the youth by the throat with the tremendous gripe of his gauntlet, and, throttling him for a moment savagely, lifted him clear out of the saddle and hurled him to the earth with such violence that he lay stunned and motionless. "Take that," he said, with a bitter sneer, "take that, to teach you manners! And, since you deign not to accept our mercy, by Heaven, you shall fare the worse of it. Hold my horse, monk," he added, as he leaped to the ground, and stood up to the prostrate youth. "Who is that groaning there?" he exclaimed, as a faint acclamation of pain reached his ear, from the old steward, who, sorely bruised and shaken by his fall, was just recovering his senses. "Par Dieu! I can not hear myself think for the noise. Jump down from your horse, Le Balafré, and cut his throat at once; cut it close under the jaws, down to

the back-bone ; that will stop his cursed clamor ; and then come hither with your knife."

The brutal mandate was executed in an instant, despite the feeble struggles of the old man, and the screams of the servant-girls, who were so near the wretched being that his blood literally spirted over their feet and the hems of their dresses ; and then, bearing the deadly instrument, a huge double-edged knife, with a blade of a hand's-breadth, and two-feet in length, still reeking with the evidence of slaughter, the scarred and savage ruffian approached his chief, who, with his vizor raised, stood perfectly unmoved and calm, contemplating his victims with an air of quiet, easy satisfaction. The man looked at him for a sign, and he replied to the look ; " Wait ! wait a little while ! he is coming to—and it were pity he should die without feeling it !"

" O God ! O God ! be merciful—spare him, thou man of blood—spare him, and I will bless thee, pray for thee, love thee ! yea, bribe thee to the deed of mercy, with all I hold on earth !" exclaimed the lovely Marguerite, flinging herself from her horse before his knees, and clasping them in agony as she grovelled at his feet ; while her uncle heaped offer upon offer of ransoms that on a foughten field would have bought dearly an earl's freedom.

" By all that's holy," answered the brute, " but thou art wondrous beautiful !" and with the words he raised her from the ground, and held her for a moment's space at his arms' length, gazing with a critical eye into her pale but lovely face ; then drawing her suddenly to him, he clasped her to his breast in the closest embrace, and pressed a long, full kiss on her reluctant lips. " Thou art most wondrous fair, and thy lip is as soft and fragrant as a rosebud ! I would do much to earn the love of one so beautiful ; but thou hast nothing, sweet one, wherewith to bribe me, save thine own person, and that is mine al-

ready, as thou shalt learn ere long ! Cease thy absurd, unmeaning prayers, old man, they are of no avail. Balafré, the good youth, is alive enough to feel now !” and, at his word, the ruffian knelt down coolly, and plunged his weapon three several times into the bosom of his unresisting victim, while with one fearful, shivering shriek, Marguerite fainted in the arms of the Red Bastard.

“That is well ! that is well ! now seeing that this worthy senior hath somewhat more of sense than young hopeful, we will give him a choice for life. Gag him, and tie him to yon chestnut-tree ; if he survive till morning, without the wolves discovering him, he may live yet many a day. Look sharp, my men ! Bring out your mule, monk, and bear me this fair dame before you. Carefully, sir—and, mark me, see that you do not dare so much as look or breathe upon her lovingly ! The maids will ride on with us, on their own hackneys ; and, hark ye, silly hussies, no wrong shall be done to you, save that women in their hearts deem no wrong, phrase it as they may ! so ye keep silent ! but just shriek once again, and ye shall share the fate of that old dotard. André, and you, Le Balafré, bring up the mules. Away ! away ! or we shall scarce meet Talebard by daybreak !”

His orders were performed upon the instant, and to the very letter. The terrified girls ceased from their painful sobbings ; the old man, in despite of desperate resistance, was made fast to the tree ; and the monk, bearing on his saddle-bow the lovely maiden, still, happily for her, insensible, the Rouge Batard mounted his potent charger, and, with his captives and his booty, rode at a rapid pace into the forest, the depths of which were now as dark as midnight.

CHAPTER II.

THE KNIGHT.

THERE is a little hostelrie in the village of Merk-Braine, which bears the marks to this day of the most extreme antiquity ; and which, if it be not the same that offered hospitality to travellers in the days of Philip Augustus—those glorious days of old knight-errantry !—occupies at least the same position, and discharges the same functions now, as did its scarcely ruder prototype long centuries ago.

It was, at the period of which I write, a wretched clay-built hut, with unglazed lattices ; a ragged porch of old worm-eaten timber ; a bush, or dray branch rather, over the door ; and a broken flagon suspended from a pole at the gable, to indicate to passers-by the character of the tenement. Uninviting, however, as was the exterior of the building, and unpromising of better cheer within, so rude were the accommodations of the age, and so threatening the aspect of the evening—for it was autumn, and the equinoctial storm, which had for some time past been brewing, seemed now about to burst in earnest—that an acclamation of pleasure rose to the lips of the leader of a little party of horse, as he drew in his bridle at the door, and shouted for the hostler

He was a tall and powerful man, of some six or eight and thirty years, with a bold, manly countenance, sun-burnt and darkened by exposure to all weathers ; a full, well-opened eye, of a bright sparkling blue, and a quantity of close-curled auburn locks clustering round his temples. His beard and mustaches—for he wore both—were considerable darker than his hair ;

but the latter were so small and closely trimmed, as to detract nothing from the effect of his well-cut firm mouth, which with his ample brow, was decidedly the finest feature of his face. His dress was the superb attire of a baron of that day in his complete war-harness, except that he wore on his head only a low cap of black velvet, trimmed round the brim with ermine, while his casque was suspended from the saddle-bow of his principal attendant. He was then sheathed from the throat downward, in panoply of palated Milan steel, polished till it glanced to every beam of light like a Venetian mirror; yet it glanced not with the cold lustre of plain burnished iron; for in the tempering of the metal, it had been wrought to a rich, purplish blue, resembling not a little the finest modern enamel, and was moreover engrailed, to use the technical term, with threads of golden wire, so exquisitely welded, in patterns of rare arabesque, into the harder steel, that the two substances were perfectly incorporated. It must not be supposed, however, that the whole of this superb suit was exposed to the sunshine, which, reflected from its surface, would have been intolerable to the wearer, or to the rain, which would, ere long, have dimmed its polish; nothing, in fact, was visible of the armor, except the gorget defending the neck, the brassards, vantbraces, and gauntlets on the arms, and the splents covering the legs from the knee downward; for all the chest and thighs of the rider were clad, above the mail, in a surcoat, or loose frock, of fine white Flanders cloth, fringed with deep bullion, and having a chained dragon—the well-known cognizance of the counts of Tankarville—emblazoned on the breast, on thick embroideries of gold. The splendid warrior, however, carried no offensive weapon, with the exception of a richly-mounted dagger at his girdle; nor was he horsed on his ponderous charger, but on a slight and delicate Arabian, of a deep iron gray, whose springy limbs and slender pasterns would have

seemed utterly inadequate to bear the weight of so large a man sheathed in so ponderous a harness, had not its wild, large eye, its red, expanded nostril, and its proud, tremulous snort, as it chafed against the curb, proclaimed it full of the indomitable spirit of its desert sires. His attendants were three in number. An old dark veteran, with hair as white as snow, but with a ruddy, sun-burnt face, radiant with health and animation—who, mounted on a strong, black charger, bore, in addition to his own accoutrements, his master's lance and helmet. The other two were ordinary men-at-arms of the period; armed indeed with unusual exactness, and mounted on beasts that might have borne a king to battle. Of these, one carried the two-handed broadsword of the knight, with its embroidered baldric, and the small heater-shaped shield, embossed with the same bearing as his surcoat; the other led his destrier, a tall, full-blooded Andalusian red-roan, with snow-white mane and tail, barded for battle. Ponderous, indeed, was the burthen, of both man and horse, in those days; for the knight's charger bore, in addition to its huge plated demipique, a chamfort covering the forehead, connected to a series of stout plates running down the vertebræ of the neck, and fastened to the saddle-bow; a poitrel of fluted steel protecting the whole chest and counter, and the bard proper, guarding the loins and croupe, from the cantle of the saddle to the tail. All his armature was wrought point device, to match the harness of the rider, and, like that, was covered by a housing, as it was termed, of white cloth rickly laced, and decorated in several places with the same figure of the chained dragon. From the pommel of the saddle were slung, one on either hand, a battle-axe of Damascene steel, and a heavy mace-at-arms. The reins of the bridle were not composed of leather, but of two plates of metal, a hand's breadth wide in the centre, but tapering toward the bit to which they were attached by solid rings, and toward the

hand-piece, where they were connected by a stout thong of bull's hide.

Such were the persons, and such their attire, who lighted down, a short space before sunset, at the door of the village tavern, seemingly not a little pleased to have attained its shelter before the storm should burst, which was already howling through the forest.

"Matthieu," exclaimed the knight, as he sprang down from his palfrey, with a clang and clatter that might have been heard half a mile off, "Matthieu, good friend, let the men take the bridles off, and feed the chargers; but bid them on no terms unbard them, nor lay their armor off themselves. These woods of Soignies and Ardenne are rarely free of brigands; and though we have heard tell that those infernal miscreants, Tal-ebard Talebardin, and the Rouge Batard, have fallen back into Normandy, before King Philip's host, I hold it likelier far that they would tarry here in force, to waylay the small parties, such as mine and five hundred others, which are all straggling up to the rendezvous at Mirepoix. Look to it, old companion; and then come in and see what cheer we may find for the night; sorry enough, I trow; but 'better,' as the adage goes, 'a beggar's cassock, that no covering in a storm.'"

And with these words he entered the single room, which occupied the whole ground floor of the cabin, serving for kitchen, hall, and parlor; wherein he found an old and withered crone, as deaf, apparently, as a stone-wall; for she took no notice whatever of his entrance, her back being turned as he stooped under the low doorway, though he made noise enough, with his jingling spurs and clashing harness, to have aroused the seven sleepers

"What ho! good dame," he cried, "canst give us somewhat to eat, and a drink of good strong wine to warm us this cold night?" And as he spoke, he flung himself into a huge, old-

fashioned settee, by the hearth, the woman gazing at him all the time with an air of stupid bewilderment, which excited his mirth to such a degree that he laughed, literally, till the tears ran down his cheeks ; increasing her confusion and dismay by every succeeding peal of merriment. At length, after sundry ineffectual efforts, interrupted by fresh shouts of laughter, he made her comprehend his meaning ; and, that once done, she speedily produced some cold provisions, with a flask or two of wine, very superior in quality to what could have been expected, from the appearance of the hut. The joints, however, of roast boar's flesh, and the venison pastry, which composed the principal parts of the entertainment, had all suffered considerable dilapidation ; and it was in apologizing for this, that the old woman let fall some expressions which aroused in an instant the jealousy of the wary soldier.

"It was a party," she said, "from Ghent, or Bruges, or Antwerp it might be, that had passed by at noon with a great train of merchandise ; and such an angel of a lady, so young, and soft, and tender, and kind-spoken ! Poor thing," she added, "poor thing ! 'twas pity they had rid forth into the forest ; but the Lord's will be done ; and if it be his pleasure, sure he can guard them from the peril—"

"Peril ! what peril, dame ?" shouted the count, so loudly that she failed not to hear and comprehend him ; "what peril they should run I know not, unless it be a late ride into Braine-la-Leud ; and it may be a ducking, which, I trow, will scarcely drown this beautiful bourgeoisie. Ha ! say what peril ?"

"Well, well ! she knew not," she made answer ; "the forest never was over-safe ; besides the gray monk of Soignies was here as they came up, and mingled with their train, and questioned closely of their route. God send it be all well : I be a poor, old, helpless thing, and know naught of their doings."

"By our lady of Bonsecours !" muttered the knight between

his teeth, "but it seems to me thou dost know over-much for honesty;" and then—"Whose doings, mother?" he continued; "and who is this gray monk of Soignies? or what hath he to make with their well-doing?"

"Nay, nay! I know not; all the world, I thought, had heard tell of the gray brother—all the world twenty leagues round."

"But happening not to dwell within twenty leagues round, I have not heard tell of the gray brother; so now, I prithee, dame, enlighten me."

But by no exhortation, or even threats, could he extort another word from her; for she had apparently relapsed into impenetrable deafness, and sat crooning some old ballad over the hearth, a picture of the most utter imbecility. The knight pondered for a few minutes deeply; and once he half rose from his seat, as if to order out his horses; but when he reflected on the distance they had journeyed without any bait, he sank down again in the settee, drained a deep draught of wine, and with his eyes fixed on the embers of the wood-fire, continued in a fit of musing, until he was interrupted by the entrance of the old ecuyer Matthieu, and the two men-at-arms, from the stable.

Bidding his followers take care of themselves, and get to their food quickly, for he should start again so soon as the steeds had eaten up their provender, he was again relapsing into thought, when his squire addressed him suddenly—

"Where be the servants of the inn, beau sire?"

"There be none, Matthieu," answered the knight very quickly; "not a soul, save this cursed old witch, who, whether she be deaf or no, simple or over-quick, by mine honor I am at loss to tell!"

"Nor be there any hostlers in the stable-yard; though there be forty stalls of stabling, and corn and hay sufficient for a squadron, and plenty of dry litter, and signs enow of many

horses! Nor is there, for so much as I can learn, one man in the whole village—if village one may call this heap of filthy hovels. Not a soul have I seen, but one foxy-headed boy, who ran away and hid himself, so that we could not find him.”

“I fancy, my good Matthieu,” replied the count quite coolly, “I fancy we have fallen into a precious den of routiers and ecorcheurs. The hag let out, I know not what of travellers who had passed by at noon, and were all like to come to evil; but I could make naught out of her.”

“So, please you, beau sire,” interrupted one of the men-at-arms, who had been listening attentively, their own suspicions having been much awakened; “so, please you, beau sire, but that I have heard say you do not like such doings, I could find a way to make her hear, though she were as deaf as the grave, and answer, too, though she were as dumb as a hedgehog.”

“How so, Clement Mareuil?” asked his master, sternly. “How could you make this wretched old hag hear, if the drums of ears be palsied?”

“Easily, beau sire, easily! let me but tie your bunch of matches between her fingers, and just light the ends, I warrant me she will tell all her secrets that you shall hear them a league distant. When I was carrying a free lance in Schoenvelt’s light battalion—”

“Hark thee, Clements,” interrupted the knight; “I have heard say that Schoenvelt’s light battalion was little better than a band of tondeurs. Himself, I know, though a fierce champion, and a manly, to have been at the best a barbarous marauder. Now, mark me! Let me hear such words as these once more! much more let me hear of your doing deviltries, such as you phrase so glibly! and, were you the best spear in Flanders, I would strip you of my bearings, and scourge you with my stirrup leathers, till your back should be more

tender than your mercy! For shame! you a soldier, and talk of torturing a woman!"

"Nay, nay, beau sire," answered the man, much abashed; "pardon me, for I meant no evil. Every one knows that all the villains hereabout are in league with the gray monk of Soignies and the Red Bastard. I warrant me this old hag knows all their haunts as well as I know."

"Methinks you know too much, Clement," interposed Mathieu, "of these routiers thyself. I warrant me, thou countest fellowship with this Red Bastard!"

"No, no, sir! not so bad as that," replied the soldier, looking very much confused; "not I, indeed—though, to say truly," he continued, "when I served Shoenvelt, there was a proper man-at-arms among his free companions, as hideous as the foul fiend to look upon, and as cruel, too, to say the least of it! and I have heard say he is the man who now bears that soubriquet. He was base-born, I know; and his hair was as red as a fox's brush, and twice as coarse. He was a stout lance, and a right bold rider; but God forbid that I should count fellowship with such an utter devil!"

"And who is the gray monk of Soignies, sirrah? since thou knowest all about it," the knight demanded; "this old jade spoke of him but now."

"Ah! ah! I thought so, beau sire. I said as much a while since. Why, the gray monk is one whom, but that he walks the earth in human shape, and that I saw him once well nigh killed in a mêlée, I would swear was the arch enemy of man! Why, beau sire, it was he who forced the knight of Vitry's castle, and crucified him over the altar of his own chapel, while his men violated his wife and his two sisters before his very eyes!"

"To horse!" exclaimed the knight, springing to his feet; "to horse, then, on the instant! Away, Clement and Raoul;

screw on my casque, Matthieu, and hang my shield about my neck, and belt me with my espaldron, else shall more villanies be done this night. To horse, my men, right hastily!"

With the first words of their master the men-at-arms hurried to the stable to fetch out their chargers, but ere five minutes had elapsed they both returned, dragging in between them a stolid-looking, red-haired boy, whom they swore they had caught on the point of knocking a large spike-nail—which they produced, together with a hammer, as evidence of the fact—into the hoof of the knight's roan charger. The old woman's eye lightened, as the boy was dragged in, for a moment; but she instantly resumed her appearance of stupidity, and sat, as before, rocking herself to and fro, and droning over an old song, careless, apparently, and ignorant of all that passed before her.

"How now, young villain! For what wouldst thou have lamed my war-horse?" cried the count, now excited into a paroxysm of fury. "Speak out! speak out! or, by the God that made me, base peasant, I will flog thee till all thy bones are bare, and hang thee afterward, head downward, over those slow wood-ashes. Speak, or an—thou diest not—my name is not Hugues de Coucy!"

The boy glared up into his face with an air of stubborn resolution, but spoke not, nor made any sign.

"Off with thy sword-belt, Clement. Mareuil, bind him to yon door-post, and lash him till he find his tongue." His orders were obeyed upon the instant. The first blow of the heavy thong fell on the naked shoulders of the peasant, and instantly a broad, long, livid wheal rose on the withering flesh! a second, and the blood spirted to the ceiling, as if from a sword-cut! a third time Clement's arm was raised, and the stubborn sufferer cowered beneath the lash; when the old hag sprung up—"A thousand curses on thee, fool! Why dost

not tell them that the gray brother gave thee ten Flemish florins to lame the horse of every traveller should come up ere sunset, that none might interrupt their doings in the forest? And now thou knowest it all, sir knight, and much good may it do thee! for long ere you reach the great chestnut they will have slain the men-at-arms, and rifled the rich goods, and worked their will on the wenches! Ha! ha! ha! now go thy way, sir knight, and make the best on't!"

"Not I, by Heavens, till I have found a guide."

"There is no better in the country, beau sire," interrupted Matthieu, "than Clement. He knows this province for thirty leagues around, as well as ere a fox that it earths in the forest. Is it not so, Mareuil?"

"Ay, is it," answered the vassal, "seeing I was born in it myself. Yes, yes, beau sire, I can lead you to the great chestnut, and to the headless cross in the beech woods, and to the broken bridge, and to every other haunt of these marauders."

"How didst thou gain this knowledge, Clement? Hast thou, indeed, consorted with these canaille? Then thou art no more man of Hugues de Coucy! Off with my cognizances, sirrah! Get thy ways hence, and deem it mercy I let thee go alive!"

"No, no! beau sire! These same ecorcheurs, tondeurs, and pilleurs, as they now call them, were once good honest foresters, ere the wars made them first fierce soldiers, and then disbanded depredators, and now barbarous banditti. Many a deer I've struck with them by moonlight; and all their haunts and trysting trees I know of old, though twenty years have passed since I saw Ardenne."

"Away, then! en avant! Cry Tankarville to horse, and to the rescue!" And in five minutes space they had buckled on their weapons, and mounted their war-horses, and rode off at

a long, hard trot along the very road, by which the Flemish merchants had passed, four hours before, into the forest.

"The foul fiend follow ye, and hunt ye to perdition!" exclaimed the woman, as they rode off clanging from the door, "and if ye reach the headless cross at daybreak, ye shall find horse enough to harry ye!"

Dark waxed the night and darker, as they pursued their way with unabated zeal; and the wind rose, and roared among the tall trees of the forest, and whirled whole flights of leaves and many a broken branch away before its furious sweep, and the clouds blotted the faint stars; and, save that now and then a flash of lurid lightning flickered across the moonless sky, it had been palpable and solid gloom.

Onward they rode, still onward! and still the night waxed wilder. No rain fell from the scudding clouds, but the fierce wind raved awfully, and the thunder muttered in one continual dull reverberation from every quarter of the firmament, and the whole sky was one incessant blaze of blue and sulphurous fire. The deep road through the forest was illuminated bright as at noonday; and so full was the atmosphere of the electric fluid, that a faint lambent flame played constantly about the armor of the men, and flickered on the points of their weapons—an awful and appalling sight! yet, as it seemed, innocuous!

Still onward! They rode onward! Night had no terror—not even such a night as this—for one like Hugues de Coucy, when his high valor was spurred to its mettle by a high purpose. Onward! and now they passed the great chestnut-tree, a landmark known for leagues, but all around was silent and deserted. They wheeled around an angle of the road, the lightnings blazed across the causeway, and showed a scene that might have struck a chill to the most fiery heart. Five horses were there plunging to and fro, and writhing in minute agony, hamstrung by the banditti, who had not spared the

time, or who had lacked the will, to save them hours of torture. Beneath the feet of these, mangled and maimed by their incessant plungings, but, happily, insensible to any pain or outrage, lay in their curdled gore eight human bodies! Four stout-armed serving-men, three of them shot into their faces with barbed arrows, one of them slain outright by a spear-thrust, a youthful gentleman, an aged steward, or seneschal, and two unarmed grooms, hacked with unnumbered wounds—all foully, barbarously slaughtered!

The knight pulled up his charger on the spot; and, at the moment, a loud cry for aid fell on his sharpened ear.

"Who calls?" he cried, "who calls for succor? In God's name it is here!"

"I, Arnold Marillon, of Bruges," he replied, in a faint voice from the forest. "I am bound here to the oak-tree!"

"Good Lord! mine ancient friend, Marillon! Hold my horse, Clement Mareuil—hold my horse! Follow, Matthieu! Be of good cheer, fair master Marillon. It is thine old friend Hugues de Coucy, whose ransom thou didst pay, in past years, to Ferrand, earl of Flanders!—all shall yet be well with thee—ay, by St. Paul, and well avenged!"

In another moment the old man was released from his bonds, and refreshed by a draught of wine from a huge bottiau, or leather bottle, which hung at the squire's pommel, was speedily able to recount his grievances.

A few words told the fatal story. At early evening they had been ambushed by a band of four robbers only; three of their armed retainers had been shot down in the first onset, the other speared by the Red Bastard, and then," he added, half suffocated as he spoke by fierce and passionate grief, "and then they slaughtered, in cold blood, my sister's son—my dear, my fair-haired William! they slaughtered my old faithful steward! they slaughtered my poor valets! and they

have dragged away my girl, my hope, my more than life!—Marguerite de Beaufroy—to infamy, and agony, and death!”

“Clement, canst thou guide us farther?”

“To the Red Bastard’s presence!”

“Come, then, kind Marillon, take one more draught of wine, mount on Grey Termagant, and ride with us right hopefully. What has been done can be, ay, and shall be avenged! but can not be amended. What is undone as yet, as yet may be prevented. God and the good saints aid us! and thou mayst yet embrace thy niece ere daybreak.”

Not a word was more spoken, nor a moment of time wasted. The old merchant was mounted without delay; and, although weak and worn by suffering and sorrow, he rode on stoutly by the side of his deliverer.

All night they rode; but, just as day was breaking, they reached the summit of a little hill overlooking a marshy valley. intersected by a cross-road, with a thick beech-wood occupying all the bottom land, and a broken cross of stone in the centre of the causeway. Before they reached the summit of the hill, the voice of Clement warned the knight that now or never they should meet the formidable Routier; and, in effect, as they crossed the brow, they came in view of the party—four horsemen, fully though irregularly armed, and three female figures bent to their saddles with fatigue, and prevented from falling only by the bonds that fettered them. The clatter of the knight’s approach had warned them of their coming danger; and sending the women forward to the cross, the brigands drew themselves up across the road, in readiness to dispute the passage.

“Tankarville to the rescue! St. Paul! St. Paul for Tankarville;” and down the gentle slope thundered the knight and his attendants; while with equal spirit the robbers spurred their steeds to meet them.

“Ha! ha! Saynct Diable!” but his awful war-cry was cut short, for the Red Bastard, conspicuous by his crimson panoply and dauntless bearing, had singled out De Coucy, and charged him with lance in rest with singular prowess; but though he charged his lance with perfect skill, striking the very centre of the knight’s vizor, and shivering the stout ash-pole to atoms up to the very grasp, De Coucy no more wavered in his saddle, than he had done for the buffet of a lady’s fan! While his lanced-head pierced sheer through shield and plastron, corselet and shirt of mail, and spitting the marauder through and through came out at his back-piece, the shaft snapping short some two feet from the champion’s gauntlet! though slain outright, the routier sat his horse stiffly; and, as the knight’s charger still swept on, he was in the act of passing Hugues, when the latter, not perceiving that he was slain, stood up in his stirrups and smote him such a blow on the head-piece with the truncheon of his broken lance, that all the fastenings of the vizor burst, the avantaille flew open, and the hideous face of the Red Routier was displayed, livid with the hues of death, and writhing with the anguish of the parting struggle! De Coucy’s followers had fared as well as he, for two of the marauders, the antagonists of Clement Mareuil and old Matthieu, were killed in the first shock; but the priest shivered his spear fairly with Raoul, and passing by him unharmed, darted into the beechwood, and escaped.

For a moment it seemed as though the field were won, and the women rescued; it was, however, but for a moment! for scarcely was that onset over, before the thundering sound of a large body of armed horse came down the two cross-roads, blended with the clangor of dissonant horns, and wild yells, and savage outcries.

“Ha! ha! Saynct Diable!” Talebard Talebardin to the rescue!” and, wheeling down like lightning through both ave-

nues, thirty or forty savage-looking, irregular horse drove, with their spears in rest, against the little party of De Coucy.

The champion's lance was broken ; yet undaunted, he encountered the front rank ; three lances shivered against his coat of proof, but shook him not a hair's breadth in his stirrups. Three sweeping blows of his two-handed sword ! and three steeds ran masterless, while their riders rolled under the hoofs in the death struggle. But one man, though a hero, can not succeed against a host. As he raised his sword for a fourth stroke, a thundering blow of a mace or battle-axe was dealt him from behind, and at the same instant a lance point was driven through the eye into his charger's brain. Down he went, horse and man, and when he recovered his senses from the shock, a man in plain, bright armor was kneeling on his breast ; and the point of a dagger, thrust between the bars of his avant-taille, was razing the skin of his face.

"Yield thee, sir knight, or die ! Yield ! rescue or no rescue !"

"To whom must I yield me ! though it avail me naught to ask it ?" inquired the haughty baron, retaining all his pride and all his fiery valor.

"To me—Talebard Talebardin !"

"I !—I !—I, Hugues de Coucy, yield me to such a slave as thou art—to a murtherer of old men in cold blood—a violator of ladies—a torturer of babes and suckling ! sacrilegious dog ! base knave ! thief ! traitor ! liar ! vassal ! do thy worst, I defy thee !"

"Ha ! my most noble baron, is it thou ?" answered the rufian perfectly unmoved. "I might have guessed as much, by thy bold bearing—Nay ! nay ! we do not stick such lambs as thou art, for their flesh's sake, we save them for their ransoms ! Here, Croquart, Picard, Jean Le Noir, bind this sweet baron, hand and foot ; and strip him of his gay feathers straightway ; but harm him not upon your lives. By all the fiends in hell,

his ransom will bring fifty thousand crowns of the sun right readily ! So that is briefly settled !”

And with the words, he rose from the chest of the knight ; and resigning him to the hands of his subordinate ruffians, walked off to examine the field of battle, and the booty which had fallen into his hands. The latter comprised the miserable Marguerite half rescued only to be again enthralled with her two serving-women ; the old merchant, Arnold Morillon, and the stout baron Hugues de Coucy. Six of the routiers had been slain, beside the Rouge Batard ; four of the number by the hand of Hugues ! The men-at-arms, Raoul and Clement had both died fighting to the last ; but dead or living, Matthieu de Montmesnil, the old esquire, was to be found nowhere. And it is doubtful, whether, as the knight was borne away into captivity, he did not regret more deeply than either his own defeat or the seizure of the women, the disgrace of the veteran warrior who had fought by the side of his father ; and who according to the rules of chivalry, should have died under shield dauntless, rather than leave his lord, captive or dead, upon the field of honor.

CHAPTER III.

THE ESQUIRE.

It was about eleven o'clock of the morning, on a fine clear autumnal day, which had succeeded to a night of storm and fury, that a single wayfarer might have been seen seated beside the brink of a small consecrated well on the roadside between Braine la Leud and Brussels. The road, at that period, lay stretching far through an unbroken forest, which indeed covered the whole face of the country for many a league in circuit, with but a few small tracts of cultivated land, smiling like sheltered oases amid the wide waste of green leaves and waving fern, that clothed both vale and upland. It would have been impossible for a poet's fancy to conceive, or painter's hand to delineate a spot more singularly picturesque, more lonely or romantic, than that which had been chosen for a resting-place by the worn traveller, a small sequestered nook between three short but abrupt hills, which closed it in on every side save one, where down a narrow gorge, the head of a broad valley, the waters of the little fountain welled with a gentle murmur, soon to be lost in the turbulent channel of some larger but not purer streamlet. The spring-head of this crystal streamlet was sheltered from the sun and air by a small vault of freestone, wrought in rich Gothic fret-work, and surmounted by a cross of rare workmanship; an iron cup was attached to the margin of the basin by a chain, and a stone bench, over-canopied by a huge ash-tree, afforded a pleasant resting-place to voyager or pilgrim. Behind the well there rose a tall, rough bank of sand, within which was the

birthplace of those limpid waters, all overgrown with wild-flowers, and running with long wreaths of eglantine and honeysuckle, and all around it the tall Titans of the forest reared their great heads exulting in the sunshine, which bathed their airy tops in floods of yellow lustre, while all their lower limbs and moss-grown boles, and the soft, green sward at their feet, were steeped in cool, blue shadows. The sandy road, which wound through this deep solitude, seemed little travelled—for no wheel-tracks and but few hoof-prints could be traced along its yielding surface—not a sound was to be heard except the gentle breath of the morning air whispering constantly among the ash-leaves, and low gurgle of the rivulet, and now and then the sudden song of the thrush or blackbird bursting out from the thickets in a gush of liquid ecstasy, and hushed almost immediately into repose and silence. So seldom, too, it would appear, were human beings seen in that sylvan district, that an unwonted tameness was perceptible among the animal creation. Several small birds hopped down into the road, and even ventured up to drink or lave their disordered plumage in the little channel which wound across the path, within a few yards of the man's feet who sat there silently, all overdone with travel. Nay, more, a wild deer came out from the copse on the farther side, and gazed about it for a moment, and eyed the strange forms with some apparent apprehension; but seeing that he moved not, drank its fill of the stream, and only when the man raised his head from his hand whereon he had been resting, did it bound away with startled speed into the deeper woodlands.

It was the man himself who gave the point and character to the scene; for he was such a one as least of all would have been expected in that place. He was an old man, as could be seen at once, even before he lifted up his face, for his hair was as white as snow, though singularly long and abundant;

but, when he moved his dense and shaggy eyebrows, his large mustache, and pointed beard, all of the same silvery hue, confirmed the first impression, although the sunburnt and somewhat ruddy hues of his complexion, and the full, bright black eye, should have belonged to one many years his junior. His dress was as much unsuited to a foot-traveller, as it was easy to see he was ; for, besides that he had no horse or any beast of burden, his feet and lower limbs were all besmirched and stained with clay and mud of twenty different colors, caught, it would seem, from as many different sloughs and quagmires, as his being there at all seemed old and unaccountable. It was a complete suite of the heaviest horse-armor then in fashion, consisting of a very solid corslet, or cuirass of plate, worn over a loose shirt of chain-mail, the sleeves of which protected his arms, while his legs and feet were guarded by hose of the same material, and splendid shoes of steel. His helmet lay on the ground beside him, with its crest bruised and dented, and the avantaille wrenched quite away from the sockets. Above his armor he wore a cassock of buff-leather, guarded on the seams with lace, and embroidered on the breast with the cognizance of a chained dragon—but it was sorely rent and defaced, and cut quite through in many places, and dabbled with fresh stains of gore, and soiled as if with clay. His mail, moreover, was much battered ; blood might be seen oozing from beneath the rivets of his gorget, and trickling down his right arm from the shoulder.

He was very faint, too, and weary, as it seemed from his uncertain, vacillating movements ; yet he did not wait a long time, before having bathed his face and hands in the cool water, and gathered up his battered casque and gauntlets, he arose from his seat, and, supporting himself on the truncheon of a broken lance, which was the only offensive weapon he carried, except a long and formidable dagger at his belt, took the road,

dragging his legs wearily along, that led toward Brussels. He had not, however, taken many steps before the tramp of a horse coming down the road at a light gallop caught his ear, and the next moment the rider crossed the brow of the hill, meeting him face to face at a short distance off. It was a gay and handsome boy, splendidly mounted on a bright blood bay Arab, dressed in a gambeson of fine white cloth, with horse of the same fabric, and russet-leather buskins, all richly laced with gold, and blazoned on the breast with the same bearing that decked the old man's cassock. Under the gambeson he had a light shirt of linked mail, the edges of which were visible, and the neck and sleeves, polished as bright as silver, but on his head he wore only a cap of embroidered velvet with a tall plume.

The moment his eye fell on the old man, staggering feebly up the slope, he checked his horse and sprang from the saddle.

"Mother of God!" he cried in tones expressive of more consternation than could be deemed befitting an eleve of chivalry.—"Matthieu Montmesnil in this plight! Where is our lord? Speak, man, where is Sir Hugues de Coucy?"

"Prisoner!—Ermold de Clermont. Prisoner to that base villain, Talebard Talebardin!"

"Now, by St. Paul!" replied the boy, his face flushing fiery red, "I scarce can credit mine own ears! Hugues de Coucy yield him a prisoner to a churl—a base and cruel robber! That would I not believe, though I did see it happen. Thou art mad, Montmesnil, to say so."

"I did not say so, Ermold," answered the old man, in a broken voice, "sooner would I bite out my tongue with my teeth, that it should tell dishonor of the Coucy. Nathless, prisoner he is, and to that same marauder. When he refused to yield him, rescue or no rescue, they stripped his armor off and bound him, hand and foot, and keep him for his ransom."

"And thou didst see this?—Thou! thou! Matthieu de Montmesnil! didst thou see our lord bound like a beast before the shambles, and madest not in to rescue or die with him! Now, by St. Paul! I do believe thy wounds have made thee mad, that thou dost lie upon thyself—for from no other tongue of man beside thine own would I believe thee coward, and recreant, and traitor! nor do I now believe it. Oh! say, Mattheiu, say it is false that thou hast spoken! Say anything but that thou hast fled and left thy lord in durance!"

"I may say nothing but the truth," returned the other perfectly unmoved; "yet hear me out, Ermold—thus it fell out: To be short, we found last night in the forest, good Master Morillon of Bruges, bound to an oak-tree, and his fair nephew and his train all foully slaughtered; and learned how that they had been beset by the Rouge Batard; and the young lady, Marguerite, carried off with her maidens. And so we mounted Master Morillon upon Gray Termagant, and rode off all night, and at the break of day came on the rogues in the little vale of the headless cross, and charged them lustily. Our lord bored the Red Bastard through and through, as a cook spits an ortolan; and Clement de Mareuil and I, each slew his man in the tourney; but Raoul broke his lance with the gray monk of Soignies, and so the robber-priest 'scaped harmless. And just at that same instant, while our steeds were blown and all our lances splintered, lo! you, down came by the two cross-roads, Talebard Talebardin, with thirty men or more, yelling or howling like incarnate fiends, charged us in front and rear, and bore us down in a moment. Sir Hugues slew three men, at three blows, outright with his two-handed sword; and I and the rest did our best—but the roan horse was thrust into the eye with a spear-point, and our lord felled to the pommel with a mace—and Clement and Raoul were slain in a moment—and I was badly hurt, for my horse went down

rolling over me, when it was a minute ere I could get loose. And ere I did so, Sir Hugues was fast bound ; and so, when I saw that his life was safe, and that there was no chance of rescue—knowing right well that they would stick the 'squire like a pig, though they might spare the knight—I crawled into the thicket while the robbers were all thronging round our lord ; but ere I had got off a spear's length, the gray priest, who was hurrying back to join his comrades, caught me fast by the throat—but I put my dagger into him, up to the dudgeon hilt, under his corslet rim. And here I am, no recreant nor coward ! hey, Ermold ?”

“No, no ; forgive me, Matthieu, the rash word, But I was half distraught, when thou didst say our lord was prisoner to the incarnate fiends. But how didst thou come hither—hast walked six leagues since day-break in thine harness ; and what wilt thou now do, to get our good lord free ?”

“Only five leagues, Ermold—only five leagues, or a little over ; and that were no great thing, but that my harness is, as thou sayest, not the best gear for walking—and that being wounded, I can not move so lustily as common ; but for the rest, I came hither, Master Ermold, first to meet thee, whom I knew to be on the route by this time, with tidings from Sir Raimond of Fontanges—not that thine arm is strong enough to do much in a *melée*, but that thy heart is true, and thy wit somewhat quick and pregnant. And now let us take counsel. And, first, what news bringest thou from the beau sire Raimond ?”

“That he will meet our lord the tenth day hence with sixty lances, before the walls—”

“Too late !—the tenth day hence—too late for any purpose,” answered the old man ; “then must we on to Brussels ; though I trow the churl burghers will scarce unbuckle their fat bags to pay Sir Hugues' ransom, much less take bow and spear to save him.”

"No, no; that is no scheme at all. Besides, it is keen steel, and not red gold, that must be ransom for De Coucy. We must fall in and rescue him by the strong hand."

"If the strong heart could make the strong hand, Ermold," said the old warrior, smiling with a half-melancholy glance of admiration at the kindling eye and noble features of the gallant boy, "then wert thou champion such as rarely has couched lance in Flanders. But Heaven preserve thy wits; there be thirty spears at least of these marauders; and we be an old wounded man and a weak boy! 'Twill not do, Ermold, though dearly would I buy it, if it would."

"Ay! but it will, though—ay! but it will, though—for not three miles hence, marching hitherward—I passed them an hour since, for they rode slowly not to break down their destries—are thirteen lances of Franche Compté, stout, free companions, every one of them, under the leading of Geoffroy 'Tête-Noir.' I have two thousand gold crowns in my wallet, and we will buy them to the deed, and win our master from his chains, and save the beautiful Marguerite—God send we may!—for she was very kind to me when I lay ill and sorely hurt in Bruges, and gain ourselves high honor!"

"Brave boy! brave boy! 'twill do! turn thy nag straight, ride like the wind to meet them, and bring them hither with all good speed to the fountain; there will I tarry and bind my wounds up something, for they shoot now, though I felt them not a while since."

No more words were needed; the page wheeled his fleet Arab round, and touching him with the spur, darted away like an arrow from the bow, and crossed the hill-top, and was out of sight in a moment. The aged esquire in the meantime, dragged himself back to the well, and, his immediate apprehensions quelled, set about unriveting his armor and binding up his wounds in earnest. As he did so, however, he muttered to

himself, "It is for the last time! the last, most surely! I but must needs have all the strength I may for the stern struggle—stern it will be, I warrant me! and then will I die under shield freely, and willingly. Thou knowest!" he added, turning his eyes reverentially upward, "so I may see him free!"

Scarcely had he finished his brief soliloquy, before the heavy clang of armor was heard coming up the hill at the trot; and shortly afterward the spear-heads and bright pennons of the men-at-arms were seen glittering above the bushes; and then the party wheeled into full view, fourteen stout cavaliers, all well-armed in bright suits of Flanders iron, with two or three led horses, and a mule or two loaded with pieces of spare armor, lances, and provender, and several skins of wine. The leader, a very powerful man, whose jet black hair, beard and mustaches, curling in fierce luxuriance, justified fully his soubriquet of *Tête-Noir*, was busied in deep converse with Ermold the page, although by the heavy frown that lowered on his brow, and the half-despondent look of the boy, it appeared that he was not yet wrought to conviction.

As they reached the little hollow by the fountain, their trumpet sounded a halt; and while the leader dismounted, and strode up to question Montmesnil, the men picketed their horses, and prepared for the morning meal.

At first the chief of the free companions appeared reluctant to engage in the adventure, alleging the superior numbers of the marauders, the difficulty of finding them, and the prejudices of his men, who might not be willing to attack men of a class from which—though considering themselves soldiers of honor—they were not, after all, very far removed.

Here, however, it seems he counted without his host, for one of the others, a sort of lieutenant or second in command, called out loudly when he heard the words of his leader, denying, with a fearful imprecation, that they had aught to do any-

thing in common with such low thieves as Talebardin. "Besides," he added, "it were foul sin and shame, to suffer such a knight as Hugues de Coucy to linger in such durance without blow stricken in the cause. Why, before God! we should be held the shame and scorn of all France! No! no! Geoffroy, let the page shell out the two thousand crowns here, and let the 'squire pledge us his master's honor, provided we redeem him man and armor, and set the damsels free—five thousand more to be paid down in Brussels, at good St. Martin's tide—and we will breakfast here, and ride right on and win him with war weapons!"

The bargain was soon concluded, and after a hearty meal the trumpet again blew to horse; and Matthieu being provided with a fresh casque and other arms, and mounted on one of the led chargers, they rode off at a round pace, for the vale of the headless cross.

Two hours' hard riding brought them to the spot, which was still marked distinctly with the dread tokens of the fray, several dead horses lay upon the spot, among others the roan Andalusian of the knight, despoiled of his rare armor and magnificent housings, and the bodies of Clement and Raoul, where they had fallen; and all the road was poached up by the hoofs of the heavy chargers, and the gore stood in many a hoof-track curdled and horrible. But fearful as such a spectacle would be deemed now-a-days, it was of occurrence too frequent, at that time, to create any wonder or disgust in the bosoms, even of the young and delicate of either sex, much less in these stern soldiers. They halted, however, on the spot, and examined the ground very closely. And here they would probably have been entirely at fault had they been soldiers of a more regular order; for there was no distinct track from the place leading away in any one direction, but, as it seemed, the whole party had dispersed to every quarter of the compass, leaving

no clew whereby they might be followed to their haunts. It was not long, however, before the sagacity of the free companions detected the probable direction ; and the troop again got into motion, though their movements were now slower and far more guarded than they had been heretofore. After crossing the forest for about an hour, they reached a wide glade or woodtrack, through which it was evident that the marauders had passed, for the greensward was cut up by prints of hoofs, which one of the free lances confidently asserted to be the same as those he had examined in the vale of the cross. A closer investigation proved that they must have passed very recently, for a fresh blood-drop was discovered on the grass, still wet, which must have fallen from some wounded rider or spurgalled horse's flank.

Here, then, a second halt was held, and three or four of the most sagacious men were sent off in different directions, to reconnoitre the positions of the enemy. It was not many minutes before the first returned, bearing the tidings that they were close at hand, halted, as it seemed, for the evening, in a small green savannah, half circled by a swampy streamlet. The others soon came in confirming their comrade's tidings, and bringing the further intelligence, that they were eight-and-twenty men, well, although variously armed—that their horses were picketed close by, while the troopers were feasting around a fire which they had kindled—the knight heavily ironed, and the females lying a short way aloof, under a clump of trees, while some of the leaders of the party appeared to be throwing dice for the possession of their fairer captives.

Few minutes were required to form the plan of action. It was necessary to ford the brook a little way above the meadow, where the routiers lay, so as to gain firm ground and space for a charge ; and before doing this, Geoffroy Tête-Noir examined the girths and stirrup-leathers of every charger in his troop,

inspected all the arms in silence, and then, lowering his vizor, mounted his strong charger. And here the indomitable valor of old Matthieu shone out resplendent. He was so worn with his wounds and weariness, that for the last ten miles he had hardly been able to keep his saddle; but now he roused and kindled to the fray, as an old war-horse to the blast of trumpets. All prayers of Ermold, all exhortations of the condottierii, that he would remain at rest till the fray was over, were unheeded—scorned—before even Geoffroy Tête-Noir he rode in the van.

They forded the stream with success, they wheeled around the hill-side, and made ready for the onset, but in the meantime the clash and clang of their coming, aroused the routiers, and they sprang hastily to their arms. Most of them were indeed mounted—but all were in confusion, and many scarcely firm in their saddles, when the free companions poured like a torrent down the hill—"Tête-Noir—Tête-Noir for Tankarville! De Coucy to the rescue and charge home!"

The shock was terrible, the fight was fought out furiously. The superior numbers, and the despair of the routiers, would have perhaps counterbalanced the better horses, and more complete equipment of the men-at-arms, but the disarray in which they were taken, was fearfully against them; the giant strength of Tête-Noir, the high and fiery valor of old Montmesnil, and the mad impetuosity of the page Ermold, who fought in his laced jerkin, foremost among the lances, swept the marauders down like chaff before the whirlwind.

Ere yet the strife was ended, while the robbers, driven back to the streamlet's brink, were striving desperately to escape, and the free lances as desperately bearing them to the earth, Matthieu had hewed his way through the mêlée, and reached his liege lord, who had started up from the ground, but was prevented by his bonds from joining in the fray. A stream of

gore was pouring from the old man's vizor, and from a dozen rents in his plate armor, and he so staggered as he leaped to the ground, that he had well nigh fallen; yet he rushed up to Hugues de Coucy, and with his dagger wrenched out the rivets from his manacles and fetters, and tore them from the limbs of his loved lord. Then he sank down upon his knees and clasped the knight's legs with his aged arms, and wet his feet with honest, loyal tears.

"Thou art free—thou art free," he cried, "my master! thou art free, and I die rejoicing! yet say, before I die, thou pardonest my leaving thee when captive, for to this end I left thee, to this end only. Say, master, that I died thy true and loyal 'squire!'"

"No! by St. Paul of Tankarville," the knight exclaimed, "no! by St. Paul of Tankarville!—but a true knight and loyal!"—and with the word he stooped and took the old man's sword out of his hand, and striking him slightly on the shoulder, he continued, "for with thine own sword—nor ever was a better!—I dub thee knight—before the ladies, before God and good St. George! Rise up, good knight and gallant—Sir Matthieu de Montmesnil," and he raised him to his feet as he spoke, and opened his vizor, and kissed his ashy brow. But a mighty gleam of exultation flashed over the features of the dying man, and he gasped out with a faint voice, but joyous accents, "A knight! a knight—and by the honored hand of the Coucy! Too much—oh, too, too much!"

Then the count, seeing that his spirit was on the point of taking flight, laid him on the ground softly, and took his hand and knelt in tears beside him.

"When I am gone," the old man feebly gasped, "make—Ermold, thine esquire!—for though young, he is true, and—and valiant! Bury my sword beside me—farewell—De Coucy—and forget not old—old Matthieu!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEN-AT-ARMS.

THE second morning after the defeat of the routiers, and the death of Matthieu de Montmesnil, broke fair and cloudless; there had been a smart hoar frost on the preceding night, and, although the sun was already high in the heavens, the crystal fretwork of the rime still glittered on the fern and briers, bright as a warrior's mail; the air was clear and sharp, and full of that invigorating freshness which is even more agreeable to the senses of a healthful frame than the luxurious stillness of a summer day, and all the forest, in which our scene still lies, was alive with the gay notes of a thousand tiny warblers.

Faint, however, was the impression produced by the bright sunshine, or the bracing gale, or the continued melody with which the woods were vocal, on the spirits of the stout champion, Hugues de Coucy, as he rode onward through the woody passes, attended only by the page Ermold, deep sorrow brooding on his bold lineaments and broad, fair brow. He was sheathed once again from head to foot in his own splendid panoply, which had been won back from the robbers, perfect and uninjured; he backed, too, as before, the beautiful gray Arab Termagant; but the three stout and valiant soldiers, who had so lately followed him in all the pride and power of noble manhood, now lay beneath the frozen earth, cold, voiceless, deaf—even to the soul-stirring trumpets! and for the superb charger, clad like its rider in complete war array, and like him panting for the shock of battle, a slow and sober mule, heavily laden with the demipique and bardings of the slain destrier, plodded along with drooping crest and dogged

air, shrewdly exercising the patience of the young fiery page who led him by the rein, with many an execration at the slow gait from which neither blows nor caresses could compel him. No word spoke Hugues, except at times a call to Ermold, "in God's name to scourge on that lazy garron, else should night fall and find them in the forest." Thus passed the morning, dully and wearily indeed; but as the sun reached the zenith, the travellers gained the summit of a long sandy hill, whence they might see the woodlands melting, as it were, gradually into cultivated fields; and beyond these a wide tract of fertile champaign, intersected by many broad streams of water, all gleaming gayly to the sunlight; and in the middle ground of the picture the tall Gothic steeples and grotesque towers, which marked a city of the middle ages, shooting up into the thin clear air, above the crowded roofs of Brussels.

"Soh! Ermold," exclaimed the knight, halting, as he spoke, to allow the boy to draw up abreast of him, "here, then, at length is Brussels; and look you—to spare time which of God's truth we do lack sorely—I with all speed shall gallop forward; come on as best thou may, thou'lt find me at the Lion d'Or, in the Place d'Armes. I must purvey myself a destrier, and thee a coat of plate; an' if thou art to be hereafter mine esquire, and fain I would, if it be possible, pick up some two or three strong varlets to ride with us, till such time as my brother Hubert bring up my loading with the broad banner of our house. We must be on our route again forthwith, so we would save the Chatelaine de Vermeuil an onslaught from these cursed routiers, of which they spoke unguarded and unheeding, the while I lay their captive."

"Fear me not, my good lord," replied the youth, coloring high with pleasure, "I will 'make no delay on the road, and shall be up, I warrant me, at the Golden Lion, ere you be ready to set onward!"

The knight bowed his head in answer, and slackened the rein of his fiery horse, which tarried not for any farther signal, but darted away like an arrow shot from the long-bow of an English archer, over rough and smooth, up the long steep ascent, and down the headlong hill, at the same long unvarying gallop. Not once, no, not for a moment, did he lag or falter; not once did he suffer the reins to fall loose from his rider's hand, but straining eagerly against the bit, swept forward with a regular and gentle motion, like that of a bird through the air, and within half an hour stood, without a pant of his deep lungs, or a foam-spot on his housings, before the barbican and moated walls of Brussels.

A few minutes were consumed in parleying with the captain of the burgher-guard, who was on duty at the gates; but this ended, no farther interruption occurred. So that before he had been an hour absent from the page, the knight was installed in the best chamber of the Lion d'Or, as a well-remembered and much-honored guest, with a cold capon, and a flagon of Burgundy wine mulled with spices, at his elbow, the jolly landlord assuring him that he had sent for a maquignon, who would speedily furnish him forthwith a charger, such as Duke Philip would himself, God prosper him, be proud to mount in battle; and that by good luck, the Herr Jacob Vanderneer, deacon of the armorer's guild, was taking his nooning down below when his worship dismounted, and that he had departed homeward in some heat to load his journeyman with harness for the good knight's inspection.

For once no mighty discrepance occurred between the promise and performance; for scarcely was Sir Hugues' appetite appeased, before the tramping of horses in the court, under the windows, summoned him from his seat to inspect the dealer's cattle. This worthy, stimulated by the hope of high prices, and pretty well satisfied, by the great reputation

of the count of Tankarville for an accomplished cavalier, that any of the ordinary tricks of the trade would be on this occasion thrown away, had brought out in the first instance the flower of his stables, resolving merely to atone for this deviation from ordinary rules by demanding at least twice the value of each particular animal. There were, indeed, several fine-looking beasts among the dozen or fifteen which were paraded to and fro by the grooms on the pavements; but one especially caught the baron's eye as fully capable of supplying the place of his lost Andalusian. It was a tall and powerful black horse, with a white spot on the face, and one white foot behind; and, as the practised judgment of Sir Hugues at once determined, had no small intermixture of Barbary or Arab blood with the best Flemish strain. The price demanded for this charger, although after he had nearly kicked out the brains of one groom, and had actually pulled a second out of his saddle with his teeth, and shaken him as a terrier-dog would a rat, the dealer admitted him to be a vicious devil—which trait, however, he affected to consider as an advantage, rather than the reverse to one so famed for horsemanship as the sieur de Coucy—was even for that age stupendous. Without seeming, however, to consider this, Hugues ordered the black horse to be set aside, and proceeded to select a second by no means inferior in blood or beauty, though somewhat slighter made and lower than the first, which he judged fit to carry Ermold in his new character of esquire. While he was yet engaged in examining the chestnut, the landlord touched him on the shoulder and presented three tall fellows, whom he declared to be honest lads, well known to himself two of whom had seen some service, and were eager to be admitted to the preferment of following a lord so famous. The first of these, him who had never served, the knight at once rejected; and then, after asking a few questions of the others,

he desired the taller of the two, who was likewise the older soldier, to jump up on the black horse, bare-backed as he was, and ride him round the yard. The grooms laughed aloud at the coolness with which the baron gave this order, as though it were the easiest thing in the world, and the maquignon, who was acquainted with the aspirant, cried out, "Have a care! have a care, Giles! for he's as full of tricks, ay! and as stubborn as a fiend."

"And if he be the fiend himself, I care not, Master Andrew," answered the fellow; "for the foul fiend had to carry Master Michael Scott, as men say, the Scottish magician, across the seas from Salamanca to St. Andrew's, and I trow Master Scott could hardly back a destrier with a free lance of Flanders."

And with the words he strode up to the black charger, and laying his hand on the mane, sprang, almost as it seemed without an effort, to his back. In an instant the fierce brute reared bolt upright, and positively leaped endlong into the air, alighting on the pavement with such violence that sparks of fire flashed from the stones under the dint of his hoofs; and scarce had he alighted before he fell into a succession of plunges, kicking and lounging to and fro like a very devil, but all to no avail; for the trooper sat him as though he had been a portion of the animal, till, having run through all the changes of its vice, it became quiet for a few seconds' space, when he dismounted, and walked back to his place with a well-satisfied smile on his countenance, not in the least out of breath or decomposed by his late exertion.

"Well ridden, Giles," exclaimed the knight, "exceedingly well ridden; now an' thou listest to follow faithfully my banner, thou mayest do well in these wars."

"So please you, beau sire," answered the man, "I'll do my best for it; and little doubt to win your favor, if honest bearing and stout blows will win it!"

"That they will, that they will, good fellow," answered Sir Hugues; "never thou fear it! and thou, sir, wilt thou brook the trial, and mount black Sathanas there?" he continued, turning to the younger man.

"I will, Sir Hugues, I will," he answered humbly; "for I am not afraid; though, to say truth, a man may ride well, and yet not be a match for yon black devil. But I will risk a fall for it. No man shall say Francon Van Voorhis sought service with the count of Tankarville, and when he might have gained, lost it for lack of heart."

As he finished speaking, he too crossed the yard, and succeeded in mounting the formidable horse, which immediately resorted to its old tricks, displaying no small degree of activity and skill in controlling the first plunges. As if, however, he had been but irritated by his rider's efforts to subdue him, snorting and foaming till his black, glossy limbs were spotted as if with snow-flakes, the mighty horse dashed to and fro, scattering the grooms like sheep, and at length freeing his head by a violent effort, and jerking out his heels a dozen times in succession, hurled the youth Francon from his back, like a quoit from the arm of a strong player. Luckily for the man, he fell upon a heap of horse-litter, which had been swept out from the inn-stables, else had he never moved limb any more! as it was, he was sorely bruised; yet as he rose, lame and limping, and shook the straws from his doublet, he laughed cheerfully, and said: "Better luck next time, sieur horse, thou mayest unseat me, but the fiend's in't if thou canst scare me." And he made as if he would have tried his fortune again; for he offered to catch the horse, which was careering furiously about the court, no one daring to approach it; but as he did so, "That will do, that will do, my lad," cried the knight, "for one day, at the least. Thou hast done well, and wilt do better yet, I warrant me, ere thou hast followed the Coucy's banner a twelve-

month. Get thee in with thy fellow Giles ; and mine host, give them each a quart of Rhenish, and that presently. We must to horse ere long—but now to conquer this swart demon, which must be done at once, if we would have him useful." And instantly as the horse darted past him, he snatched the halter with his right hand, and brought him up with a jerk that threw him, for a moment, on his haunches ; then, all armed as he was in the heaviest panoply of the day, he vaulted to his bare back at a single bound, and plunged the rowels of his gilded spurs up to the head in his flanks. For a few moments the struggle was tremendous ; at first it seemed as if no human power or skill could have controlled the frantic efforts of the furious stallion ; but as the knight sat firm, baffling each successive plunge, and answering every kick with a corresponding motion of his armed heels, it soon became evident that he must be the master of the day ; for, after a while, every plunge was weaker than that which preceded it, and anon quite baffled and subdued, panting and blown—the proud war-horse stood still. Then the knight wheeled him round, and walked him to and fro, and patted his high crest, drawing off the mailed gauntlet from his hand ; and again pricking him gently with the spur, put him through all his paces, and passaged him around the court, winding him to and fro with the least touch of the rein, as gently as a lady's jennet. Then he dismounted, and standing by his head, caressed him quietly for a few moments, and then walked away toward the stables of the inn, the conquered destrier following as peaceably behind him, as though he had been the tamest cart-jade in the city. While this strange scene had been in progress, Ermold de Clermont arrived at the inn-gates, mounted as we have described him, on the bay Arab, and leading the mule loaded with the bard and housings of the baron's horse ; and stood in silence looking on the good knight's prowess, till the black stallion was completely vanquished. Then

he stepped up to Hugues, and took the bridle of his destrier, and transmitted to the grooms of the hostlery, his lord's commands to clean and rub down his new purchase thoroughly, and arm him with the full horse-armor and housings, as speedily as might be.

The countenance of the two troopers, who had not yet gone, having waited to see how their new lord rode, evinced how vastly he had risen in their estimation; and the elder of the two kneeled down before him, as he returned from the stables and said, "Hear me swear, beau sire, never to swerve or falter, never to turn back from the deadliest brunt of battle, never to draw the rein or sheath the sword, so long as you are in the field before me; for here I vow myself your man, through weal and wo for ever, in life and unto death! For if I leave thy side, while thou art in the field and fighting, or if I die not on thy body when thou liest under shield, full knightly, then may my patron-saint desert me in mine utmost need; may good Saint Peter lock heaven's gate against me; and hell receive my soul! For sure thou art the noblest knight, the stoutest leader, the completest champion, that couches spear in Christendom!"

The other, as he perceived his fellow's action, and heard the vow which he uttered, threw himself on his knees beside him and stretching out his arms, cried with a loud voice: "Me! me!—me too! good knight; hear me, for I swear likewise"—and all the while the big tears rolled down his sunburnt cheek, and he sobbed audibly, so deeply did he feel the responsibility of the service which he was undertaking; till, as Giles finished his speech, he uttered a loud "amen! on my soul be the oath—amen!"

A bright gleaming smile played over the animated features of the knight, as he listened to the fervent exclamations, and looked upon the agitated countenances of his followers; for

he was in truth well satisfied ; knowing that in minds of low and grovelling order there, are no springs of such enthusiasm, and arguing thence that these his newly chosen men-at-arms were moulded of the right metal for making chivalrous and gallant soldiers.

“ Well spoken, both of ye,” he answered, “ well spoken, and I thank ye for it ; and if ye be true followers to the Coucy, trust well that he to you will be true lord and loyal ; and for the rest of God’s truth, I have seen some service, and, so the good saints prosper me, shall see more ere I die ; and if ye list to lay lance in the rest among the foremost, ye shall not long lack opportunity, nor, it may be, advancement. Go in now, go in and refresh ye ; and that done, we will fit ye with good plate-coats, and tough lances, and we will ride forth this same night upon adventure. But hold ! hold ! I would see your judgment in this same article of horseflesh—choose, each of ye a charger out of the lot before ye, and if your choosing like me, why I will stand the upshot.”

With many thanks, the soldiers turned to the grateful task, proceeding to the business with so much alacrity and readiness as proved them, in their own estimation at the least, masters of the art. It was not, however, till after much chafing with the maquignon, and much consultation with each other, and much more examination than the knight had judged necessary before choosing his own destrier, that they pitched upon two powerful and well-bred horses, which meeting Sir Hugues’ approbation, were set apart with those which he had already selected.

This matter of the horses having been thus satisfactorily arranged, it remained only to equip them and their riders with their necessary arms and housings ; and scarcely had the hostlers led away the chargers to get them fitted at the saddler’s with their steel-plated demipique and chainwork bridles, before

the deacon of the armorers reappeared, accompanied by four or five stout serving-men, dividing among them the different pieces of two complete suits of armor, suited as nearly as might be guessed to the page Ermold ; on trial, however, one of the two proved quite too large ; while the other, which fitted perfectly, was pronounced by the knight to be of too splendid a fashion for his esquire, being all engrailed with damasking of silver.

“ Ermold shall go with you,” he said, “ good master armorer, and I will trust to you to fit him forth becomingly, let the harness be of plate—bright steel, but without ornament ; if it be of Alnayn rivet, or from a Milan forge, so much the better. A close casque of the old fashion, with a fixed avantaille—and see there be gusset of good mail, hooked firmly to the corslet rim, and upper edge of the brassards, to guard the oter from arrow-shot or thrust of some sharp weapon, when the right arm is raised. Dost mark me, ha ? And ye, good fellows, go with him likewise ; fit them, I pray you, both, with your best harness of burnished Flanders iron, complete—dost understand ?—complete from head to foot, steelboot and taslet, brassard, vant-brace, and corslet, and see here ! none of your open morion or bacinets, but good stout cerveilleres, with beaver and mailhood. That done, I will entreat you to commend them to a leatherworker’s, where they may get them each a cassock of dressed hide to wear above their mail ; white, mark you, Ermold, and laid down on the seams with lace, and see ye that the suits be of one pattern, that ye look orderly and neat, not loose, irregular companion. Furnish them, likewise, thou, Herr Jacob, with double-handed swords, and dudgeon daggers of a hand’s breadth, and a good battle-axe apiece of ten pounds weight or better. Now hurry, my men, hurry ! for by the Lord that lives the day is waning. Now, Vandenkopf,” he added, turning to the landlord, “ go in and speak with me, for I must

needs draw a bill on Master Morillon of Bruges, or if it like your money-changers, better on the intendant of my estates of Tankarville, to pay for these same steeds and harness !”

This would have been at that day, in any other state of Europe, a task of no small difficulty, but even at an earlier date than that of which we write, the intelligent and industrious Flemings had been in the habit of using something analogous to bills of exchange ; the invention of which is variously attributed to the Jews, the merchants of the low country, and the traders of the Italian republics ; and to one so famous as Hugues de Coucy, there would have been no difficulty in raising even a larger sum than he required among the opulent goldsmiths and jewellers, who were in those days the bankers of Brussels.

The sun was still high above the western horizon, although it was long past noon, so rapidly had De Coucy's men, eager to gain the good opinion of a lord at the same time so liberal, and, if report spoke true, so strict in the maintenance of discipline, got through the task allotted to them, when the baron's party issued forth by a different gate from that which had admitted him, into the great plain beyond the city-walls. They were not, perhaps, in all respects so complete a train as that which had accompanied the baron previous to his encounter with the Red Bastard, and his confederates, but they afforded, notwithstanding, a noble spectacle ; for the horses were picked beasts, and the new men-at-arms tall, well-made fellows, and good riders, bearing themselves erect and proudly in their saddles beautifully equipped, and managing their own chargers with ease and skill, while each led a spare horse, the two Arabs before-mentioned, lightly equipped, and loaded with spare armor and a few staves for lances. The young esquire—for to that honorable station by dint of gallantry, bold zeal, and approved fidelity, Ermold de Clermont was now fairly inducted—wore his beaver up as he caracoled

gayly behind his liege lord, his whole face radiant, and his eyes lightning with enthusiastic pleasure; so that no one could doubt for a moment that his young high spirit would effect far more than could be expected from his slender frame and juvenile appearance.

They had not ridden far before the knight made a sign to him; and when he rode up to him, desired him to relieve the man-at-arms called Giles, of the horse he was leading, and send him forward, as he would speak with him for a few moments. The exchange was effected in a minute, and with a deep obeisance the trooper trotted sharply up to his lord's side.

"So, Giles," the knight began, "Master Vandenkopf tells me thou art a thorough guide for all this Netherlandish country. Is it so, good fellow?"

"Nearly so, beau sire," the man answered; "all on this French frontier I do know foot by foot; and on the northern side there are, I do believe, few better guides than I up to the Elbe at least, and on the Rhine as far as to Cologne, so please you."

"Well, it does please me wondrous well! Now, sir, where lies the chateau de Verneuil? How strong is it, and how manned? Nigh to what town or hamlet, and what chance of mustering men about it?"

"It lies some ten leagues hence northwesterly, in the very thicket of the forest, not very far from Tirlemont and Hannut; at least those are the nearest places to it. There be a few small tenures round about it, and a little, oh, a very little village at the hill-foot. Then, as for its strength, it is but one square keep, with a few out-buildings in a court-yard, surrounded by a low wall, with some half-dozen turrets at the angles. The present seigneur has, indeed, dug a new moat, and filled it from a neighboring rivulet, and built a low barba-

can over against the gate—but the Lord love you! it has no strength at all. Why, twenty men might carry it, and as for help, there is no help to be got nigher than Hannut, and that must be four leagues. I have heard, too, that the sieur de Floris—he is the chatelain, you know, sir—has ridden thence some months ago to join the English queen at Mirepoix, where she is waiting, as they say, her bad son, John's arrival. I do believe there are but scant ten spears in the chateau, and no better captain than the young lady!"

"And they will be attacked at daybreak, to-morrow, by forty routiers at least, under that ruffian, Talebard!"

"Ha! Talebardin," said the man, "and the Red Bastard, I will warrant it, and like enough the gray priest, too! Well, beau seigneur, however you may know it, of this be sure, if they do attack the chateau, then they will carry it, most surely."

"No, no! good fellow! the Red Bastard will couch lance no more, nor the gray brother either, nor shall they carry the chateau so readily."

The trooper looked bewildered for a few seconds, as if he were at a loss to comprehend De Coucy's meaning; and then taking courage, asked, "How, my lord?—how shall they no more couch lance when it is their trade alway?"

"Because my spear-point went in at his gorget-joint, and came out through his back-piece, yesternoon—the Red Bastard's I would say!—and as for the gray brother, my good companion and true friend—a saint in heaven now—Mathieu de Montmesnil slew him in the same hour beside the headless cross."

"Pardieu!" exclaimed the soldier, "but this shall be glad news for Brussels. They have harassed its merchants sorely these past years; and now, seigneur—"

"And now," returned Hugues, "thou must guide me, as straight as thou canst ride, to the chateau of Verneuil. I vow

to Heaven and good St. Paul, if we get thither ere they reach the castle, they shall not win it scatheless. Is she so young, this lady chatelaine—is she so young, Giles Ivernois?"

"Scarce eighteen years, beau sire, I've heard them tell! She was but wed last Shrovetide. The sieur de Floris brought her home from some place in France or Languedoc. Her name, methinks, was De Navailles—Gabrielle de Navailles!"

"Ha! Tête de Dieu! Gabrielle de Navailles!" exclaimed the knight, a deep red flush crossing his brow, and passing instantly away, so as to leave him paler than before. "Ha! is it so? So much the more need then of speed to rescue her," he added, muttering to himself in a low voice. "Well, guide me thither straightway, and with all warrantable haste to boot. I would be there by midnight."

"And it is now four afternoon, I trow," replied the trooper, gazing toward the sun, the lower limb of which was already sinking into the topmost boughs of the tall forest-trees. "We must ride hard, then, beau sire; but we'll be there ere midnight, my head on't. I fain would counter blows with Talebard. I knew him long since when he was an honest man and a brave soldier, as now he is a foul thief and accursed murderer. I fain would counter blows with him. He is a stout lance, and a valorous—a right good man-at-arms. Yet it should go hard with me but I would match him. There were great *los* to be won and glory, and no small guerdon either. Why, his head now is worth forty pounds of silver well weighed out; and under such a leader as monseigneur, I fear not we could win it. Well! we will reach Verneuil ere midnight, or I'll die for't."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHATELAINE.

THE knight's new follower failed not to make his promise good, knowing, as it was evident he did, even before the sun set, every foot of the country through which their route lay to the château de Verneuil; but when the daylight had quite faded from the face of the world, and the last faint reflection of the vanished rays had ceased to tinge the fleecy night-clouds, it became more and more apparent how perfectly he was acquainted with every turn and winding of the devious roads which traversed those wild tracts of moor, morass, and forest; for he never paused nor doubted at the *carrefours*, or intersections of some six or eight long avenues, cut through the wide expanse of underwood, with here and there a giant tree which for the most part covered that part of the country, but led the way at a sharp steady trot, wheeling his horse to this hand or to that with the decided confidence of a man acquainted thoroughly with his direction, and with the nature of the ground. More than one large strong brook and several rivulets crossed their path, offering in one or two cases considerable obstacles to their proceeding; but Giles Ivernois never hesitated even for a moment, but either leaped them boldly, or plunged into their well-known fords undaunted. At about nine o'clock of the evening they halted at a small way-side tavern, embosomed in the deep woodlands, and built as it would seem for the convenience of belated hunters, in honor of whom it rejoiced in the name and effigy of "the Bald-faced Stag." This solitary house, or hovel rather—for although

neat and even picturesque in appearance, it was in size but a very cottage, the last on this side the hamlet of Verneuil, as the man-at-arms informed his lord—was situated something more than seven leagues from Brussels, and not above eight miles at farthest from the small castle toward which they were speeding.

“The road is good henceforward, beau sire,” replied the trooper, in answer to a question from the baron; “better than any we have seen yet this side Brussels. This country hereabout lies over limestone, and for the most part it is under tillage, our horses fresh and fed, we may right easily be there within the hour.”

“Dismount, then, all,” cried Hugues, “for we shall need each spark of fire that we can keep alight in their keen spirits. Ermold, see that ye get a stoup or two of red wine, and bathe their pastern joints and fetlocks. Have we some dozen slices of raw beef, or venison better—if there be any in the house—cut thin, and wrap in each slice of meat one of the cordial balls of choice medicaments, I bade you bring from Tankarville. Give one to every *destrier*; see them rubbed clean and warm; then feed them with bread steeped in red wine, and they shall be in spirits for the road, or e’er an hour be flown, and livelier, I warrant them, than when we rode forth from the city-gates.”

The young esquire responded by a bow only; but Giles Ivernois, the elder man-at-arms, made answer, relying on his skill in horse-flesh, “Under your favor, my good lord, a clove of garlic, pounded with a handful of ginger, were added well to the red wine. I would, though, we had here some of that English drink they call brown beer or ale; bread steeped in that is the most hearty food and sovereign’st thing for jaded steeds I ever saw or heard of. They brew it out of barley, beau sire!”

"Ha! and what knowest thou, good fellow, of England or of English liquors?" asked the knight, laughing at the trooper's freedom.

"So, please you, I heard tell of it the first from an old equerry who rode erewhile with Richard of the Lion Heart. I met with him in Guienne, many a winter since. He called himself a Yorkshireman, though where Yorkshire lies I know not, were I to hang for it, but I *do* know he was the cunningest and skilfulest with horses of any man I ever did consort with. He had store of wise saws, and wondrous remedies, and some of them I have remembered ever since, this being one of them. I proved it once in the Black forest, when I was chased three days with thirty lances by the bad lord of Hohen-Zollern. They brew beer there right potent, beau sire—and Heaven be blessed for it and the three holy kings of Cologne! I laid it to the ale, and the old Yorkshire equerry, that I escaped them—for I fed my good beast at every halting-place with rye-bread soaked in that black beer, and may I never drain a flagon any more! if he became not so fond of it, that he would drink a stoup *oop-seyes*, like a stanch toper!"

"I doubt it not—I doubt it not at all," replied De Coucy; "but as we shall find neither English ale, nor yet black German beer here in the forest, we must make red wine do for it; and hark ye, Giles and Francon, though the beer suit the horses better, I doubt not but the men will find the grape-juice full as pleasant."

"Never fear, good my lord," returned the soldier, "never fear, we will do all your biddings to the utmost, and be in time to garrison the chateau, and save the bright young lady, and beat the villain routiers!" and with the words he followed his companions to the stable, whither they had already led the horses, while Hugues, who, for the last three days had tasted little rest, entered the inn to seek such brief refreshment as

mine host of the Bald-faced Stag might offer. Short, however, was the period which he devoted to repose ; for ere an hour had passed, he and his men were in their saddles and in rapid motion with their good horses, not recruited only, but fuller, as the knight had augured, of spirit and high fire than when they had started on their journey some six hours before, during which time they had carried each a tall and powerful cavalier sheathed in so ponderous armor, that he weighed thirty stone at the least reckoning.

The moon had risen, too, during their halt, and the roads proving, as Giles had predicted, firm and in good condition, they rattled on at a brisk pace keeping their steeds, however, hard in hand with all their harness jingling merrily, and their bright weapons flashing like diamonds in the misty moonlight. A quarter of an hour brought them into the open country, widely extended in rich plains, dotted with clusters of lofty forest-trees, and bordered by soft, sloping hills, feathered with hanging woods and many a waving coppice. No villages were visible, however, in the glimmering light, nor did the summit of a single steeple glitter out from the tufted tree-tops. A few poor huts, dwellings of the degraded, wretched serfs, who tilled—hereditary bondsmen—the vast demesnes of their proud feudal lords, tending rich herds, the flesh of which was never to be tasted by their famished children, and pressing the rich grapes never to glad their hearts with their joy-giving vintage—a few poor huts they passed, surrounded with styes in long ranges ; or, in some instances, with large folds for the swine or sheep, which their inhabitants were forced to guard at peril of their lives ; but not another sign of human life did they encounter. Suddenly, after they had ridden between six or seven miles, and were just entering again a tract of forest land, the deep loud clang of a heavy bell came booming

on the night-wind pealing from some unseen clock-tower the last hour before midnight.

"There! there! beau sire, we are in time; that is the *ban cloche* of the chateau; when we shall pass the second turn, we shall be in the hamlet!"

"Ha!" cried the baron, "on, then, on! we have no time to lose, for all it is not midnight."

The road swept down a little sandy pitch, at the foot of which ran a clear brawling trout-stream, wheeled short to the left hand, and having crossed the stream by a steep, one-arched bridge of brick, scaled the ascent on the opposite side, and winding abruptly to the right, the dark ever-green pine-trees, which clothed the banks of the gully scattering off diversely, burst out into the little plain whereon were clustered round a small rustic chapel, some twenty tidy-looking cottages with cultivated stripes of garden-ground before the doors, and several orchards interspersed with apple-trees, and a few vines trained upon the latticed screens, the whole presenting a calm and gentle picture of peaceful and domestic comfort. Scarcely a bow-shot beyond these, its base and outer wall concealed from the road by the close foliage of the still verdant orchards, rose the gray weather-beaten tower of the keep, a tall square building with a steep, flagged roof and projecting battlements, having a circular bartizan at every angle, with a high flag-staff rising from the ridge of the main donjon. A loud vociferous barking was set up by a dozen of deep-mouthed mastiffs, as the little band of De Coucy rode clanging and clattering round the hamlet, and many a male and female head was thrust out of the latticed casements to note the character of the intruders, and was as speedily withdrawn, reassured by the appearance of the baron clad in his splendid surcoat. Within five minutes they had cleared the village and its scattered shrubbery, and stood before the barbican of the chateau in full

view of its slight defences. It was, indeed, a place of but little strength, as Giles Ivernois had stated, yet the knight readily perceived that his new man-at-arms had somewhat underrated its capabilities of defence; for the moat was not only broad but very deep hewn out of the solid limestone rock which lay beneath the soil at a few inches' depth, and the external wall, though not high, was very strong, and built so close upon the verge of the fosse, that it was quite impossible to effect a lodgment at its base. The corps-de-logis was, moreover, evidently framed with a view to stout defence, being built in a hollow square with all the windows looking inward, crenelled and looped on the exterior for shot of arbalast and long-bow with the tall dongeon-keep in the centre of the square, a citadel and last stronghold, commanding all the out-works. So absolute, it would seem, was the security of the inmates that no sentinel kept watch upon the barbican, no warder on the massy more; nor that alone! for all the clanging sounds of the plate-armor, and the thick trampling of the destriers, and all the baying of the watch-dogs had failed to rouse one sleeper of the castle's guard.

After he had sat, something longer than a minute, silently overlooking the defences of the place, the knight of Tankarville lifted his bugle to his lips and wound a long, keen challenge, which, to ears practised in the science of *mots* and *enséangies* of ancient houses, would have conveyed the information that the head of the bold De Coucys demanded entrance at the gates. One, twice, however—nay, three times was that keen call repeated, ere it found any ears to mark it; and when at length the tardy warder did deign arouse him from his slumbers, he also blew a challenge, so heedless was he or so ignorant of his accustomed duties. Before, however, the shrill flourish of his trumpets had ceased to wake the slumbering echoes, De Coucy shouted loudly, "Ho! warder, up port-

cullis! Unbar your gates, and down with your *pont levis*! Open to a good friend and loyal. 'Tis I—I, Hugues of Tankarville."

"I dare not, for my life, beau sire—nor could I, if I dared—the keys are with the chatelaine!"

"Then wake her, sirrah, and that speedily; tell her the knight of Tankarville beseeches of her courtesy that she will presently admit him, with but three comrades, for reasons he will show hereafter!"

"'Twere of no use, beau sire," returned the warder; "the sieur de Floris is abroad, and our fair ladye 'bideth since in strict seclusion."

"Dally not, slave, with me," shouted De Coucy, shaking his fist angrily at the man, who now showed himself half armed upon the esplanade above the barbican; "dally not, slave, with me, but do my bidding! else, by the Lord that liveth! I will break in perforce, and hang thee from the pinnacle to feed the ravens of Verneuil."

What reply would have come from the warder can not be known, for ere he could reply the blaze of several torches were visible upon the ramparts, and in a few moments Hugues might clearly see upon the gate-house over against the barbican a female figure, wrapped in a hooded mantle furred deeply with rich ermine, with several armed attendants, and an old gray-haired seneschal beside her.

Low bowed Hugues de Coucy till the plumes of his waving crest were mingled in strange contrast with the long, thin mane of his coal-black charger; and when he raised himself from that deep obeisance, he spoke with a voice, rich and clear and manly, yet soft the while and soothing as the tones of the southern lute.

"I pray you," he said, "beautiful and gentle ladye, I pray you of your courtesy and charity, open your gates to one, who,

for so gentle deed, will ever rest your debtor—I, Hugues, baron and count of Tankarville.”

“Sorry, am I, sir knight,” replied the lady; “sorry am I, and very loathe to answer, but my good lord of Floris hath ridden these four months past abroad, and I have bound me by a vow that no strange knight, nor man-at-arms, nor even priest nor friar, shall tarry after sunset beneath my castle-roof till he return from peril. Pardon me, therefore, gentle knight, pardon me in that I seem discourteous, and deem, I pray you, my vow churlish, and not me!”

“Lady,” replied the Coucy, “lady, I do beseech you ope to me, and by my faith, my knighthood, and mine honor! thou shalt in naught infringe the strictness of thine honorable vow. I ask not to set foot within thine hall—not to break bread, or drain cup at thy board—I ask but leave to pass your outer gates, to plant my pennon on your outer wall, to aid with my good sword and such poor skill as I may boast, in the defence of this your castle against the villain routiers of that accursed ruffian, Talebardin, who will be at your gates with sixty spears long before daybreak. God and the Virgin aid us and blest St. Paul of Tankarville, we will beat off the dogs who else will be too strong for ye, and the adventure done, we will ride forth again asking no guerdon, e’en of thanks—no benison, nor reward, save of our own good thoughts. Refuse me this poor boon, and, lady, hear me swear, I, Hugues de Tankarville, baron of Flanders, count of France, knight of the empire—swear by my ladye-love, and by my patron-saint, and by the bones and soul of my dead father, that, if I may not on this field preserve your life and honor, I will at least die for them; that if I may not win for Tankarville and Verneuil, I will at least fall without stain, and draw my last breath under shield nobly, and in a noble cause, fearless of aught on earth and confident of heaven!”

“Good knight! good knight!” exclaimed the lady, “good knight and noble if ever one was yet! Ride in! ride in! and welcome. I do repose me on your honor—I do confide me to your valor—I do trust fearlessly to your strong arm;—for his arm must of need be strong whose spirit is so high and holy. Let fall the gates there, knaves—lower the bride—raise the portcullis grate! Room for the count of Tankarville!” and with the words she left her stand upon the ramparts, and came down hastily to meet the renowned and mighty champion whose fame was rife through all the bounds of Christendom.

Meantime, the heavy grate of the barbican was raised, and the wide leaves of the gate flung open, and Hugues rode in bowing his lofty crest beneath the pointed arch, followed by his stout men-at-arms and his young spirited esquire. The moment he had entered the dark vault, the stately warrior leaped to the ground, and turning short to one of the men who had admitted him, and who had of course heard all the previous parley, “We have no time at all to lose,” he said, “good fellow; so run down thou and summon all the serfs of the hamlets, and all the freemen—if there be any in the place—bound to man-service; bid them make haste as they would live and prosper, for Talebardin and his routiers will be upon them ere an hour, and ye have room enough within, I trow. Get all the women in and children; these dogs spare neither age nor sex! Haste thee, good fellow, for I will bear thee out with thy good lady. Ermold, take thou my rein. Dismount not, Ivernois, nor thou good Francon, I shall have need of ye anon, for we will charge on their advance with a good sally! So! so! Here comes the chatelaine!” and, as he spoke the words, he lowered the beaver of his plumed helmet, but keeping the avantaille still lowered, so that although his mouth and all the lower part of his countenance was uncov-

ered, his eyes and brow were still concealed, so that a person who knew him only by sight, without being acquainted with his style or title, would have had some difficulty in recognising him, and advanced to meet the lady chatelaine, who was now standing in the arched gateway on the inner side of the moat, surrounded by some six or eight men-at-arms, with the old seneschal beforementioned, and a single handmaid at her elbow. She was a delicate and slender girl, with nothing mantronly either of air or figure, not certainly above eighteen, and of rare beauty, as might easily be seen; for her furred hood had fallen back, and left the whole of her fair face and all her classically-moulded head exposed to the full glare of the torches, which lent a warmer tinge than common to those pale, eloquent features. Hers was the beauty which, though not so generally appreciated, must be pronounced far higher in the scale of loveliness than mere voluptuous charms. Beauty it was, indeed, of the first intellectual order; the high pale forehead from which the dark, brown curls fell off in shadowy masses; the slight expressive curve of the black eyebrows; the long-cut eye of deep, clear gray, radiant and pure as a transparent spring, yet calm and self-restrained; the classic, almost stern profile, contrasted with the sweet arch of the rosy lips; the bright, translucent paleness of the skin—all! all were perfect—perfect in their unsensual, tranquil beauty, while the expression of the whole was full of eloquence, of mind, of music. She was a being whom, perhaps, ninety-nine men out of every hundred would have passed by unheeded, as cold and passionless, as a fair statue rich in proportions, rare in grace, but senseless and inanimate, whom *he*, the hundredth, would *not* have loved, but adored, idolized! as a thing almost too pure, too spiritual, for any earthly worship. And so she had been worshipped! and had returned that worship with the young, trusting, innocent, devoted love of a free virgin heart!

She had been wooed and won, and plighted, and then ill days and evil tongues had come between, and the frail thread of true love had been broken—broken, alas! to reunite no more

Two years had intervened, and they who had parted then heart-broken lovers met for the first time now. She, the sad, spirit-broken bride of an ill-matched and aged spouse. He, the young, unknown knight of those past days, revealed as by enchantment, noble, and chief, and champion. It boots not to search back into their early fortunes; it now were profitless alike and tedious. Enough they stood together. He knew her as of old, and worshipped as he did then, and pitied as he then did not. For he well knew the cruel arts by which her late consent had been wrung from her to that most ill-assorted wedlock. He knew her spirit true to himself alone, when all beside was given to another. Yet did he know her pure and innocent of soul as in her earliest maidenhood—a too true wife to a passionless and aged lord. Therefore, concealed he stood before her, and quelled his passions like a hero as he was, resolved to add no sorrow to her sufferings by revelation of the identity, all unsuspected and undreamed, of her young nameless wooer with the renowned and far-famed baron who had thus ridden to her rescue. And she received him as a stranger; yet as a stranger known so well by the loud bruit of his great deeds, that he was scarce less than an intimate, even before he had approved himself a friend by this his gallant aid. She prayed him raise his avantaille, and enter her courtyard, and begged him once more to excuse her vow, which must prohibit his admission to the hall. “Meanwhile,” she added, “my vassals are even now preparing with earnest speed such a pavilion as may suffice to shield a champion so famed for hardihood of mood as the great Hugues de Tankarville, and there, good knight and gentle, there may I tender you

the kiss of honorable welcome, the rights of courteous hospitality!"

"I, too, dear lady," answered the Coucy, "I, too, must plead a vow, and pray your pardon also for the semblance of discourtesy. When first I learned by chance the purpose of this dog banditti, I registered an oath in heaven never to raise my vizor, nor to unbelt my weapon from my side, until the slaves be scattered to the four winds of heaven, and you, dear ladye of Verneuil, be scathless, even from fear. For the rest, I beseech you waste no time in rearing gay pavilions, but let each man-at-arms, and groom, and varlet of your household do on his harness for defence. Let them fetch arbalasts and quarrels, long bows, and sheaves of arrows to the wall, and let them bend that great mangonel I see upon the ballium, and suit it with a befitting stone. Your seneschal, if you permit me to take the ordering of the day, should take post in the keep, and when the villains show front clear of the forest, ring the *ban cloche* in one continuous peal, and ply them from the battlements with hail of flight-shot, arrow, and bolt, and bullet. There must you be too, lady, with every woman of your household, and such serfs of the hamlet as you may best rely on—nay, I insist on't, and will lead you thither." And, with the words, he led the chatelaine to the door of the keep; and as the villagers came in, he picked a dozen of the stoutest vassals, and placing them under the guidance of the seneschal, commanded him, as he regarded his young lady's life and honor, to bar the gate of the 'dungeon on the inner side, and open it no more, save at his bidding, or till the routiers should be driven from the walls and utterly cut down. This done at length, for Gabrielle, convinced after much instance, ceased to remonstrate, Hugues took command of all the outworks, and, having placed his little band—little, indeed! since he found in the place only six men-at-arms and five stout serving-men,

to whom were added eight or ten half-armed vassals from the village, on all the points of vantage—he joined his own men in the barbican, resolved to charge once with the lance before he should be shut up within walls of stone, and sat there motionless on his tall war-horse, until the stars paled in the azure heavens, awaiting the approach of these fell desperadoes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SERF.

THE morning was already beginning to dawn palely, at least a few faint streaks of light were visible from the summit of the watch-tower, far on the verge of the eastern sky, when a dull rustling sound made itself plainly heard above the rippling murmur of the trout stream in the valley, and the sough of the west wind in the evergreen branches of the pine wood. None but a practised ear could have distinguished then, the character of that far sound, but scarcely had it been audible a second before Sir Hugues de Coucy turning half round, toward Ermold, in his steel saddle, said in a clear, strong whisper; “Lo! they come now; lower your vizors all, and follow me, silently though and slowly!” and with the words, he drew down his own avantaille and clasped it firmly to the beaver; then, gathering his reins up with the left, and lowering the point of his long lance that it should not strike the groinings of the barbican, he rode forth cautiously, accompanied by his young squire, and the two men-at-arms; before he left the arch, however, he called to the warder bidding him see the chains of the portcullis clear, and have his yeomen ready to make fast the gates at once. “Be steady now,” he said, “and forget not that deliberate valor is worth

ten times as much as headlong rashness. Break but your lances fairly with these thieves, and draw off instantly, leaving me last. Here they come, fifty horse at least, if I may judge by the clash and clang; they will be here anon. Now do your devoir!"

While speaking, he had drawn up his little band in line, having Giles Ivernois on his right hand, and Ermold in the centre, the other Flemish trooper holding the extreme left, close to the high fence of an orchard. The road here made a little sweep, of something better than a hundred yards, skirting the verge of the moat and the castle wall which with its arbalasts and mangonels commanded the whole traverse. It was, moreover, very narrow, ascending in a gentle slope up to the outer gate, giving the knight and his companions the ground of vantage for a charge on the assailants.

Scarce had the knight of Tankarville completed his arrangements, before the loud, deep note of the *ban cloche*, succeeded by its continuous and deafening clangor, announced the presence of Talebardin and his routiers upon the village green, although they were not as yet visible to Hugues and his party, in consequence of the cottages and gardens of the hamlet covering their advance. A loud, shrill blast of bugles, blended with the dull boomings of the Norman kettle-drum, rose high and keen upon the morning air, quite overpowering for a moment, the louder peal of the great bells, while at the signal the broad banner of the house of Floris was displayed on the battlements, and a sustained and well-directed flight of shafts and quarrels, was poured upon the enemy from that commanding elevation. In answer to the music of the garrison the wild marauders set up simultaneously a yell of fierce defiance, which had in its shrill tones, something so fiendish and unearthly that it made the heart of the firmest thrill, and struck cold consternation through the weaker spirits of the beleagured garrison.

A moment afterward a flash as if of fire was seen springing up through the dry thatch of one of the low hovels, another, and another, and then a broad, red glare rushed up from all the burning village, crimsoning the whole canopy of heaven, tinging the dusky foliage and weatherbeaten trunks of the old pines with a strange, ruddy lustre, and showing every loop-hole and crenelle in the castle-walls, every serf, man-at-arms and warder on the battlements, as clearly as if it had been noonday. Directly afterward a shaft or two were shot against the walls from the covert afforded by the scattering groups of fruit-trees on the esplanade, but so well did the archers on the barbican perform their duty, pouring in shot of long and cross-bows, with ever and anon a huge steel-headed beam launched from the mighty mangonel, that the routiers in that quarter fell back at once without so much as discovering the band of De Coucy, which if it had not been cut off, must have been desperately endangered, at the least if the marauders had made good their charge, and taken a position midway between the barbican and the knight's party. Ten minutes or a quarter of an hour had elapsed thus, when a fresh shout was set up from above the gate. "Gare ? gare ! beau sire !" and a first flight of missiles was launched against the spot where the road issued from the hamlet. No more was necessary to set De Coucy on his guard ; " Now !" he exclaimed, " now ! gentlemen !" couching his lance as he did so, and pricking the flanks of his black charger with the spur. At the next instant with their wild yell, and their accursed war-cry, the robbers wheeled out from the cottages at a hard gallop, and for the first time perceiving the bold baron, bore down upon him in a solid column of sixty horse at least, with levelled lances. So well, however, had the knight taken his position, that four men only at a time could come against him, the narrowness of the road making it quite impossible for more than that number to array themselves in

front, with room sufficient for the management of their steeds, and the wielding of their weapons. This, indeed, was the only thing which gave the least chance of success to the defenders, yet even with this chance, the odds were fearfully against them, particularly when it is taken into the consideration, that Ermold though of a high and dauntless spirit, and from his boyhood upward trained to the use of arms, was in years but a stripling, who therefore could not be expected to cope with full-grown men on terms of equality or vantage. The robbers, who formed the first rank, were evidently stout and hardy men-at-arms—he who appeared their leader riding, when they drew out of the cover of the burning village, on their left flank, nearest the moat and therefore facing Ivernois. He was a tall and powerful man, above six feet in height, and limbed proportionally to his stature, completely cased in armor, apparently of Spanish wormanship, not of bright steel, however, but of plain, unrelieved, dead black. To this there was but one exception, that the whole front and vizor of his helmet had been wrought into the shape of a bare, grinning skull, colored in the appropriate hues, while over this dread emblem of mortality, there waved a tall, black plume, like those which now are used to decorate the roofs of hearses; his shield which was black likewise, to suit the rest of his armor, was blazoned with a scull and cross-bones argent—the barding of his *destrier* a huge black Flemish stallion were framed to match his rider's panoply, and altogether it would have been difficult to find a stouter or better appointed-cavalier, though there was something awful and disgusting in the emblazonry he had adopted, with the intention clearly of striking terror to the hearts of his opponents. As soon as this formidable personage descried the knight of Coucy, he shouted something to his nearest comrade, the import of which was drowned by the thunder of the horses' hoofs and the din of the plate-coats; but it was easy to perceive

what must have been the meaning of the cry, for spurring out a little way before his rank, he passaged quickly to his right, his comrade making the same movement to the left, and then reined back immediately into the line, placing himself, as the result of this manœuvre directly opposite to Hugues. The three companions of the black rider, were all strong troopers completely armed, and powerfully mounted; but their appointments were in no respect to be compared to the accoutrements of Talebardin, for he it was who bore that grisly frontlet, though all but one had in some slight degree endeavored to increase the terror which everywhere accompanied their presence by some detestable and horrid signs of carnage. Thus one of them, it was he who now couched his spear against Giles Ivernois, a tall man in a brazen harness with a particolored feather of red and purple, had hung about his neck, after the fashion of a knightly chain, a string of human teeth, torn from the jaws of living victims to force them to produce their real or suspected treasures. The third, a slighter figure who wore a shirt of dim and rusty mail, had decked his casque in lieu of crest or plume with a thick, plated tress of beautiful soft, sunny hair, dabbled in many places by dark stains of gore, which must have been shorn from the head of some highborn and lovely female. The fourth alone was armed in clear, bright steel, carefully kept and polished, and had adopted no more odious emblem of his calling than a green plume in his casque, and a green dragon painted on his shield, seeming to indicate his Saxon origin. Long as it has occupied us to describe the leaders of the routiers, it did not take the great French champion five seconds to run over all the details with his bright intellectual eye, before he called aloud to his men, to bear them bravely, shouted his war-cry of St. Paul, and dashed with his four lances against the overwhelming force of the marauders.

Talebard Talebardin bore him like a man; his spear-head

struck full on the fess-point of De Coucy's shield, and bored it through and through, but turned quite blunt and edgeless as it encountered the fine temper of his Milan plastron, the tough ash staff bursting into a hundred splinters up to the very grasp of his gauntlet. Not so the champion's: he had charged his lance full at the hollow socket of the skull-avantaille's right eye, and had it entered there, the race of Talebardin had been run on earth that moment; but just as they closed, the robber seeing his peril, threw his head up sharply, so that the lance-point struck below the eye just where the vizor met the beaver, and tore the helmet, which remained upon the baron's spear, quite off the ruffian's head. Still Talebard sat firmly in his saddle till the knight's destrier plunged in, and striking with the horn of his steel chamfront under the bardings of the other's counter, forced him to rear up, and then hurled him backward, falling upon his rider and overthrowing two more of the robbers who rode next behind. The like success attended each one of the Coucy's followers; Giles Ivernois' antagonist went down, his throat transfix'd above the gorget's rim, that the steel-point came out, all stained and gory, under the edge of his *cerveilliere*. Francon Von Voorhis broke his spear fairly with the English rider, but better horsed than he, bore him down by the shock, while strange to say, young Ermold, though slighter in his frame and weaker from his years than any of the others, charged with such prowess striking his man upon the crest, that he hurled him ten feet out of his saddle, and his own horse outmastering his bridle-arm drove on with his lance still unbroken, and in its rest, and splintered it in full career against the shield of a robber in the second rank bearing him likewise to the ground. "Ha! a good lance! a good lance, and a better blow," shouted the baron, as he saw his young esquire's fair exploit; "rein up now, rein up all, and back with no delay Giles Ivernois, take thou my lance and pitch it in

the wall above the barbican. Back, back at once—hearest thou not, Francon? Back both of you ;” and though reluctantly and slowly, both did fall back at his command, while he, unsheathing his two-handed broadsword, prepared to cover their retreat. Ermold, however, although he heard his lord’s command, and was all eager to obey, was so entangled in the *mêlée*, that he could now by no means extricate himself ; for his unruly horse had dashed into the very centre of the robbers, who were all in confusion reeling about and in complete disorder, the whole of their front rank having been overthrown as by a thunderbolt, with three men of the second, and four horses. Well was it, therefore, for the gallant youth that they were for the moment in so fearful disarray, and that his own horse plunging to and fro with reckless fury augmented the dismay, biting and kicking with his heels, and striking with his forefeet at everything that came near him ; for had it not been so, he must have been beaten down and slain before the champion could assist him. It was not long, however, that he remained unaided, for shouting in a voice heard clearly over all the din, “ St. Paul ! a Tankarville to the rescue ! ” the baron, too, rushed into the disordered rout. The first blow of his sweeping broadsword fell on the barded neck of a stout war-horse, and breaking the strong plates, clove half way through the neck, and laid both steed and rider prostrate on the earth ; the second drove in the helmet on the head of another, and fracturing his skull, slew him upon the instant ; the third dashed down a third of his opponents, but broke the weapon to the hilt, and left the warrior for the moment weaponless

Still the esquire was extricated from the press and rescued, and bidding him ride in as sharply as he might, Hugues stopped a moment to loosen his mace from the saddle-bow, then galloped after him, leaving the routiers all in disarray, gather-

ing up their dead, and succoring their wounded. Just at that time, however, the archers on the barbican who had been quite unable to loose a shaft at all during the hand to hand encounter, seemingly overlooked the count, or if they did not overlook him, mistook him for one of the routiers, and discharged a whole flight of arrows. Five or six took effect at least upon the person of the knight, piercing his overcoat and rebounding from his armor, but did not, such was the temper of his panoply, wound him at all, however slightly. This, as it seemed, however, did not satisfy them, for although did Coucy shout with all the power of his lungs, shaking his clinched fist angrily at the men on the walls, they followed up their volley by bending the great mangonel against him, and before Giles could hinder them, who had run up to the esplanade above the barbican, to pitch his master's lance upon the wall, they turned the winch, and the huge engine was discharged. The vast beam hurtled through the air, and striking the knight's charger on the counter, buried itself in the body of the animal, breaking its forelegs and killing it instantaneously despite the heavy armor by which its chest was covered, as could have been done by a modern cannon-ball.

The champion was pitched headlong, and his face striking the ground first, he was completely stunned for the moment, and lay there insensible with the blood streaming through the bars of his avantaille from both nose and mouth, in consequence of that rude concussion. Meantime, the robbers had recovered altogether from the temporary disorder into which they had been thrown, and rushed on in a body, Talebard, who had regained his feet, running bare-headed in front of all the horses to seize the prostrate champion, nor did it appear possible at the moment that any timely rescue could be made; for Ermold and the others within the archway of the barbican could not discover what was

to do without, and those on the esplanade were too far off to give effectual assistance. Giles Ivernois, indeed, rushed down the steep stone stair, taking three steps at every clanking stride; but he would have arrived too late, for undismayed by the archery which was aimed at them from above, killing one man outright and wounding several others, the routiers were within three paces of De Coucy, who was beginning to move faintly, as though he were recovering his consciousness, when a man leaped the palings of the orchard and interposed himself between the baron and the ruffians. He was a tall young man of seven or eight and twenty years, magnificently formed and having something of an untaught grace in his bearing. He had no helmet on his head which was covered only by a thick mass of jet-black curly hair, which set off admirably the unburned hue of his expressive manly features. His eye was dark and very brilliant, his brow broad and well developed, and all his features fine and delicately shaped. In fact, he was an eminently handsome man, not in form only but in feature, and what is more remarkable, in the expression of his features also, which was decidedly of an imaginative and intellectual cast, with no small portion of firmness and undaunted daring displaying itself in the vigorous outlines of his well-marked mouth and massive jaws. His dress, however, was much at variance with the distinguished beauty of his person; it was the dark, coarse tunic of the cheapest serge belted about the waist by a broad leathern strap, which was peculiar to the serf or villeyne; his feet, too, like his head, and all his legs from the limb downward were bare to the weather. He had no weapons but a woodman's axe and a knife at his belt; yet not for that did he shun to encounter a score of mail-clad veterans; he waved the broad axe round his head, and, as the robber-chief came on, he dealt him such a blow before he had indeed observed the rescuer at all, that he had not by a half-

instinctive effort broken the force of the blow by his shield, he never had moved limb any more. Luckily, at the same moment wherein Talebard recoiled, and after staggering a moment sank on his knee, a cross-bow bolt struck down the next of the marauders, and profiting by the occasion, the young man raised the count from the ground, and throwing him with all his heavy panoply across his shoulders, he darted off with him, as if he had been quite untrammelled by a load, toward the barbican, and was already leaving his pursuers far behind, when Giles, and Ermold, and a dozen others, rushed forth and hurried them within the arch, when the strong doors were forced to in a moment and barred with jealous haste, while, at the self-same point of time, the steel portcullis came clanging down its groove of stone, and all was for the time secure.

The din, as it appeared, restored De Coucy to his senses on the instant, for he leaped to his feet, raised his vizor, and wiped away the blood from his beard and mustaches with his mailed hand, exclaiming as he did so, "Where am I?—Ha! 'That was a perilous mischance!—Where am I?—In the barbican?—Who brought me hither?—Was't thou, Ivernois?"—"Not so, beau sire," replied the veteran; "I was upon the ballium when you fell; this youth here brought you off, and brought you off, I will say, nobly. By the three kings of Cologne, he dealt yon Talebard a blow, that, but for his shield of proof, had split him to the chine!"

"Who art thou, then? Who art thou, my good youth, who thus hast rescued Tankarville?"

"A serf, beau sire,"—the seneschal at once interrupted him—"A mere Jacques Bonhomme—an ill-conditioned, insolent serf—if one ever was on the lands of Verneuil. He has been out marauding now, I warrant me, most likely leagued with these same routiers, else how did it fall out he was not in the hamlet with the rest, when all were called into the

castle? I prithee, beau sire, heed not the dog at all. I will account with him so soon as our hands be free of this foul scum without!"

"Nay, nay, not so, good friend," replied the baron; "De Coucy deals not so with his preserver;" but, as he spoke, the din of axes plied fiercely on the outer gate fell on his ears, and he perceived at once that a lodgment must have already been effected by the routiers at the wall foot. "But of this more anon!" he shouted. "Up to the esplanade! Bring arbalasts and quarrels!—bring boiling oil, and pitch, and molten lead! Cry 'Tankarville! St. Paul!—St. Paul for 'Tankarville!'" and he rushed up the stairs, leaving his rescuer forgotten to the mercies of the seneschal, who thrust him instantly into the dungeon of the castle, promising that he should hang upon the morrow!

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXECUTION.

THE Coucy was in time, and in time only, so fiercely did the marauders assault the gates, which creaked already, and bent beneath the storm of blows falling upon them like those of the smith upon his clanging stithy.

In the haste of his followers to bring off the person of their chivalric leader, and in the headlong rush of the routiers hoping to capture him a second time, whether from forgetfulness, or from the impossibility of securing it, the drawbridge had been neglected, and the gates made fast, but in time to prevent the enemy from entering in, pell-mell, with the defenders of the place, so hardily did they advance under the deadly hail of missiles which were poured against them.

The drawbridge they carried, almost unopposed, and a dozen of the bravest establishing themselves under the deep arch of the ballium, where they were sheltered from all means of annoyance by the besieged men-at-arms, commenced thundering on the portcullis bars, with that din which had aroused the Coucy to the full possession of his faculties, while the remainder arrayed in line on the farther verge of the moat, kept up so incessant a volley of cloth-yard arrows, many of them being English archers, free companions who had of late become marauders, that not a man could show himself upon the battlements without being made a target for a dozen of fork-headed shafts. Three or four of the light-armed vassals, unprotected by proof armor, had been shot dead or mortally wounded at the first volley, and the earliest care of De Coucy

was to withdraw them entirely from the front, under orders to hold themselves sheltered perfectly behind the coignes and angles of the battlements, and to shoot as sharply as they might through the crenelles with their cross-bows, but on no account to expose a limb to the tremendous shot of that unerring archery.

Himself, confident in his panoply, and absolutely dauntless by disposition, he strode forward to the verge of the esplanade and leaned far over the bartizan, so as to command a view of what was in process below, exposing himself to the cloth-yard arrows with a perfect contempt of death. Four or five of the steel-points struck on his corslet, and bounded back blunted into the moat; but one, more deadly aimed, found an air-hole in his avantaille, and, the elastic bars opening a little to its violent impulse, penetrated till the steel barbs were wedged in the narrow orifice, where it stood fixed, but not till it had deeply cut the flesh on his left temple, and drawn a long stream of scarlet blood, which flowed out through the orifices of the vizor, and stained his bright gorget with its fearful hue. A wild, triumphant cheer from the banditti hailed the appearance of De Coucy's gore; for it was rarely that a knight's panoply of Spanish or Italian steel was pierced by any lighter weapon than the couched lance, or severed unless by the sheer sweep of the two-handed sword, or the contusing blow of battle-axe or mace, and they hailed the champion's wound as a proof that he was not, at the best, invincible.

It was scarcely for a moment, however, that they were permitted to rejoice, for it required but a single effort of the iron fingers of the knight to wrench the arrow-head from the unbroken avantaille and the wound was too trivial even to require stanching.

Almost before it was extricated, four of the vassals of Verneuil appeared on the bartizan bearing, supported from two

massive iron bars, which they carried two and two upon their shoulders, a huge iron kettle containing at least a dozen gallons of boiling oil, the dense unsavory wreaths of its thick smoke curling upward like the reek of a witch's caldron.

"Ha! ha! St. Paul for Tankarville!" shouted the champion. "Now will we scatter them. Look to your bows, men, and your arbalasts. See that when the fiery stream scatters them from beneath the arch, you suffer none to regain its shelter! Now, then, my merry men, poise it right here above the channel of the Machicolles. So! so! Now thrust a lever under it; hook on that chain to the handle, and await the the word! Attention!" There was, as is usual in old feudal castles, a broad, deep gutter or canal, running all round the esplanade of the gate-house within the battlements, opening through some twenty wide-mouthed vents into as many perpendicular funnels or spouts, known architecturally as *Machicolations*, so framed as to discharge showers of any liquid, or fluid substance upon the heads of such persons as should be collected within the embrasure of the archway below.

This archway contained a space of about eighteen feet in depth by a width of ten or twelve, closed on the right and left by the solid flanks of the castle wall, inwardly by the portcullis and iron-gates, and outwardly by the moat, where it should have been blockaded by the drawbridge, had it been raised, as it ought to have been, in the teeth of the assailants. This, however, not being done, above a dozen of the boldest of the banditti had established themselves under the vault. And where, being under cover and out of reach of the defenders' missiles, they supposed themselves secure, and had already seriously damaged the grated portcullis, many bars of which had yielded to the furious blows of their battle-axes.

The quick glance of the knight during the moment he leaned over the battlements, sufficed to render him master of the

facts that were in progress ; and, at his word the vassals and some half dozen of the men-at-arms mustering under the shelter of the angular battlements and bartizans, held their arbalasts ready bent with the square-headed quarrels in their tubes, and their long-bows half drawn with the shafts notched upon the string, expecting the scattering and backward rush of the enemy, which should place them at their mercy.

The caldron was slung directly over the heads of the unsuspecting routiers ; the knight had armed himself with a huge iron crow-bar, the lever, usually worked by two men of the enormous mangonel, or *trebuchet*, over the gates, and now he waved it high over his helmet, shouting in tones high as a trumpet's, " In God's name let go ! St. Paul for Tankarville ! St. Paul ! "

So terribly did his voice ring downward through the machicolles, that one of the banditti was startled and looked upward. On the instant, though too late, he perceived the lurid glare of the seething caldron, and the reeking steam above it, through the narrow funnel—he foresaw the fate that awaited them.

His eyes glaring, his finger pointed upward, his terrified mouth wide open, he shrieked, " Oil ! oil ! Beware of the oil ! " He was yet in the act of shrieking, when the huge kettle was overset into the conduit, and down rushed through each one of the twenty funnels a hissing scathing torrent that literally blasted everything which it encountered, as if it had been the fire of heaven.

The miserable wretch—whose speech it cut short in mid accents, smiting him full in the staring eyes and open mouth—reeled out senseless, blind, speechless, dead probably to all consciousness of pain—whirled madly round and round upon the drawbridge for an instant, and then plunged in his agonies into the deep moat where his life and tortures ended. Two

more, full upon whose heads the fiery deluge had descended, fell dead where they stood, scalded through their panoply of proof, while half a dozen others staggered out with an appalling yell, all scathed and writhing in torture, only to meet instant death from the shafts of the infuriated archers on the walls, not one of whom missed his aim in that hideous emergency.

"St. Paul! St. Paul! for Tankarville!" and forth sprang the great champion, De Coucy, to consummate the ruin. Under the base of a huge pinnacle of wrought freestone that crowned the right hand buttress of the keep he thrust the point of his ponderous lever, bearing upon it with the whole concentrated force of his practised powers and great bodily weight, that the vast mass rocked and tottered.

At the same instant, prompt to comprehend and further every hint or movement of his captain, Giles Ivernois snatched up a gigantic sledge-hammer, part also of the apparatus of the *trebuchet*, and swinging it round his head delivered such a blow on the top of the pinnacle, just in the point of time when the knight upheaved its base, that it went down headlong, and, had not one of his comrades caught him round the body, the stout man-at-arms would have followed the falling mass, precipitated by the impetus of his own mighty effort.

He was arrested on the very verge barely in time, but sheer down rushed the immense stone, hurtling through the air, and alighting exactly midway of the planks upon the draw-bridge, dashed it to atoms with a thundering crash, so that no fragment was left of six feet in length, and that all communication between the castle and the farther bank of the moat was cut off, and, consequently, that Talebard Talebardin and three of his best men who still remained under the vault of the barbican, the boiling oil having fallen behind them, were left as prisoners immersed between the bridgeless moat and the castle gates.

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed, since the Coucy had rushed, clanking in his plate and mail, up the steps to the esplanade, though it has occupied more time to relate than it did to enact the events crowded into so brief a space; and now he rushed down again with Ermold de Marcy and Giles Ivernois, and Francon Von Voorhis at his heels, resolute to rescue his prisoners let what might come of it.

"Kill him not," he cried, "kill him not, on your lives. For he shall hang in his steel coat over the gate of Verneuil, as the Lord liveth, and as I live to swear it by my patron-saint, St. Paul! Now throw the gates wide open into the moat with the others, but, on your lives, save Talebardin."

As he passed through the court-yard toward the gate, he strode across a narrow iron grating, and, as he did so, a faint voice, as if from a great depth below the surface, came up heavily to his ears, "Rescue, lord count of Tankarville; rescue for rescue, as you are belted knight and Norman noble!"

The men, who followed at his heels, heard the dolorous cry; but whether their leader heard it or no, they knew not; for he gave no sign, but steadily rushed forward, with the fury of vengeance in his heart, and laying his own hand the first on the bars of the castle-gate, swung back the largest on its pivot. Another moment, and, his men seconding him, the heavy leaves revolved, grating hoarsely on their hinges, and instantly in rushed, mad with despair, the four routiers.

It might be, that they only hoped to die by the soldiers' weapon; it might be that they yet had a thought to master the Coucy, and so to win the castle. Whatever were their hopes, they endured but for a moment; for, though they fought resolutely with their short weapons, they were opposed to the long lances which the men of Tankarville had snatched up, and the three followers of Talebardin were borne headlong

into the moat, and there, carried down by the weight of their armor, miserably perished.

Nor did their chief fare better; for as he forced his way in, striking tremendous blows in all directions, the champion dealt him one blow on the crown of his *cervalliere*, so justly calculated, that it dashed the stout casque to shivers, and brought him down, as he intended, stunned but not slain. The gates were secured again; and, before he recovered his senses, the routier was fettered hand and foot, and dragged rudely up to the esplanade, where to expiate his crimes by an unsoldierly and slavish death.

But before the knight followed up the stair, he paused above the grating whence that said voice had issued, and cried aloud cheerily—

“Who cried for rescue on the Tankarville? If you be wronged in anything, speak now and have redress, or be for ever silent. Who cried upon the Tankarville?”

“It is I, beau sire,” replied the voice; “I, whose good luck it was, not an hour since, to bring you off from the routiers!”

“Splendor of God!” cried the count, his eyes seeming to flash fire through the bars of his vizor, and he stamped violently on the ground as he spoke—“Splendor of God! who has dared do this thing, or who am I that living man should do the Coucy this dishonor!”

“It is the seneschal, beau sire,” replied Ermold. “He has some grudge against this brave youth, and swore a foul oath, though you heard it not, that he should hang to-morrow!”

“Sooner himself, vile knave!” replied the Coucy. “He shall change places with the lad, or ere an hour. Go find the chatelaine de Verneuil, Ermold de Marcy; greet her from me as from the count of Tankarville, not from Sir Hugues de Coucy, mark me! show her how this has come to pass, and

crave of her, as my boon, the instant freedom of the serf, for it comports not with the honor of the Tankarville to owe life to a slave. With the seneschal, pray her that she take order, as she shall judge the best. Tell her, meanwhile, from me to fear nothing. The peril is overpast already; and, ere another sun, not one of these villains shall pollute the village with his presence."

He said no more, but ascended to the platform, where the routier stood bareheaded, and bound hand and foot, with a stout cord about his neck, the end of which was in the hand of the valiant man-at-arms, Giles Ivernois. The robber was pale as death already, even to his lips; yet his eye was bright and firm, and his demeanor steady. The pride of the soldier overmastered the terrors of the robber; and he was resolute to die dauntless.

He even affected a smile, as the champion approached him—"Well, beau sire de Coucy," he said half insolently, "I would have held you to ransom when I had you in my power; and I now look to you for the like courtesy at your hands. As a good man-at-arms, and knowing my own worth, I fix my ransom at twenty thousand crowns of the sun, and the surrender of my strong castle Trequier, in Brittany. My men shall draw off at once, and I will remain myself your hostage for due performance of the contract, until the whole be paid."

"Ay! indeed will you, Talebard Talebardin," returned the knight gravely. "Even if you could give me Paris, in lieu of your strong castle of Trequier, and all Guienne, Poitou, and Brittany, in lieu of your twenty thousand crowns of the sun, you should hang under this blessed sun of heaven, and your carcase should lie in yonder moat until the day of judgment, when the archangel's trumpet shall awaken it unto perdition everlasting!"

"Proud lord, thou liest!" shouted the equally proud robber,

gnashing his teeth between rage and anguish. "Proud lord, thou liest! to thy teeth, I tell thee so; even as I defy thee. And if I do go hence to perdition, as thou sayest, I care not—for I shall meet thee there, thou feudal tyrant, thou lewd lord, and cruel conqueror! I summon thee to hell, and that within twelve hours; and now to hell or heaven as it may be! but not, liar, by the halter or the gallows! Ha! ha! Talebard! Talebard! Saint Diable for Talebardin!"

And as he ended, before any one suspected his intention, he darted forward with so sudden a jerk, and so strong an impetus, that he snatched the end of the halter out of the hands of Ivernois, and bounded forward to the battlements as eagerly as if to banquet-board, or to bridal bed.

Quick, however, as he was, both of intent and action, there was one quicker yet than he; for, as he darted to the sheer descent, with the end of the halter trailing behind him over the platform, the Coucy set his mailed foot on it, half arresting it as it ran out; and, even before the robber took his death-spring, he had seized the slack in his hands and flung it round the flag-staff, where it was instantly secured by the men-at-arms.

Talebard leaped into mid air, utterly unconscious that his suicidal purpose was frustrated, until the noose checked him, and he was dashed heavily against the castle-wall, whence he rebounded again and again in his clashing panoply, until his foul soul went to its appointed place, winged on a grisly imprecation, which was the last word, on earth, of Talebard Talebardin.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH UNDER SHIELD.

As the spirit of the murderer and villain passed away, whither we dare not say, the kettledrums and trumpets rang out triumphantly, and the loud shout of "Verneuil, Verneuil, and Tankarville! and so perish all the foes of the gentle Norman race!" rose wildly and triumphantly into the air, and the great tocsin of the castle tolled dismally, the death alarum of the dishonored dead.

A moment or two later, Ermold de Marcy and an elderly man dressed in black velvet, the chamberlain of the castle, made their appearance on the ramparts, conducting the young serf, who had been instantly liberated from his dungeon at the knight's request, but who still wore an iron collar about his neck, to which had been attached a small light chain of the same metal.

The chamberlain bowed low as he approached the count, and when he stood before him holding the serf by the chain—"Fair sir," he said, "lord count of Tankarville, knight of St. Denys, and the Holy Ghost, peer of France, noble of the Roman empire, these from Gabrielle, chatelaine de Verneuil, gratefully greeting. She thanks you for herself and for her lord now absent in the field, the sieur de Floris, who present would have known better how to entreat you; she thanks you for her life, and, more than life, for her honor. She admits that she owes you all, the castle she inhabits, the lands she holds in fee or in fief, herself and all that belongs to her, from her and hers unto you and yours for ever. And now through

my hands, she thus gives you handsel of the same, the castle and the lands of Verneuil, to herself of her own right heretofore pertaining, with all its dues and droits and service, and vert and venison, and men and maids, serfs of the soil for ever, here in the person of this man, Henri le Noir of this hamlet of Verneuil, and seeing that he is serf of the soil and may not be moved thence, ten roods of ground now set off to his occupation, and the cabin he inhabits—to you and yours, Count Hugues de Tankarville, to have and to hold, to give or to sell, to head or to hang, at your pleasure. Hear this, all ye who are present, and bear witness, now and always !”

Then the knight received the chain into his hands, and uncovering his head, made answer : “ I, Hugues count de Tankarville, knight of St. Denys, and the Holy Ghost, peer of France, noble of the German, do gratefully accept the thanks of the chatelaine, and this her homage and transfer of her castle and lands of Verneuil, with all droits and dues and services thereunto appertaining—and more especially this handsel of the same, this man Henri le Noir, and these ten roods of ground now set off to his occupation, and this cabin he inhabits, and him and these I take and accept from her and hers unto me and mine, to have and to hold, to give or to sell, to head or to hang, as to us shall seem good for ever. But all besides these, the lands and castle of Verneuil, with its dues and droits, its services, its verts and venison, its men and maids, serfs of the soil, I restore and make over from me and mine unto her and hers, as it were sin and shame, unworthy of stricken knight and belted noble, to deprive so bright and beautiful a lady of anything of her beholdings.”

Then he stooped down toward the serf, who was kneeling at his feet, and taking both his hands into his own—“ Henri le Noir,” he asked solemnly, “ although you may not contest it, seeing that it is lawfully performed and duly, do you accept

the transfer from the chatelaine of Verneuil, your lady, to me Count Hugues of Tankarville, your lord, from hers to be mine so long as you shall live, to be true servant to me and mine till death."

"I do," replied the man steadily, "and I will be true man to you, lord count, so aid me God! for ever.

"An armorer and a file," cried the count, turning to Ivernois. "And give me a white wand, that of this serf, with Heaven's good blessing, we make this day a freeman. Bring trumpets, too, and a pursuivant, if there be one."

Then as the wand was placed in his hand, seeing that the armorer stood ready with his file, and that in the absence of a regular armorer Ermold de Marcy had assumed the office, he touched the man lightly on the head and on both shoulders with the rod, exclaiming, "Henri le Noir, serf thou art not, nor villeyne, any longer, but freeman and landholder and vassal of the Tankarville, for my ten roods of land I give thee in Verneuil, from me and mine unto thee and thine for ever, only thou shalt do homage to, for the same, and serve me with man-service in the field, one hundred days in the year, when my broad banner shall be displayed and my trumpets blown for Tankarville. Sound now and make proclamation."

A shrill blast was blown up at the word, and Ermold de Marcy made loud proclamation.

Then Henri le Noir again placed both his hands in the hands of his feudal lord, and swore him fealty and faith, and did him homage for his land.

And again the trumpet sounded, and again Ermold made proclamation.

And the armorer filed away the iron collar from his neck, and the white wand with which his lord had manumitted him was placed in his hand, and a sharp sword was girded about his waist, and he who had knelt down but a few short minutes'

space before, a serf and slave, whose life his lord might take at any moment, with reason or without reason, arose a free cultivator, a free owner of the soil, a free man-at-arms, capable even to be stricken a knight, or by the emperor to be made noble and to be endowed with coat-armor.

And so strange was in those day the admixture of ferocity with gentleness and even grace in the doings of chivalry, that even in the midst of the fury and frenzy of that desperate feud, the condottieri, mere brigands as they were and banditti, without the walls, panting as they were to avenge their leader's death, offered no interruption to the ceremony, shot no arrow upon the walls, but stood there silent and reverent spectators of the impressive scene, for they had recognised the person of the manumitted serf, as he who had performed the gallant deed of arms and rescued the champion, and soldiers before they became routiers, the soldier-spirit was still predominant among them, and they could both themselves honor valor, and rejoice to see it rewarded by the brave and noble.

Therefore they now stood silent and observant, nor that only, but when the trumpets and kettle-drums struck upon the battlements in honor of the new-made freeman, their bugles sent back an answering flourish, and their voices sent forth a full-mouthed cheer, even while the carcase of their late chief Talebardin wavered in the wind, like the vilest carrion swaying from the castle-walls.

Within a minute or two of the completion of the ceremonial, and almost at the same instant, the hard galloping of horses was heard by the beleaguered garrison from two several directions, of one, and apparently the nearer of the two, the sounds came down the road, by which the Lord of Tankarville had gained the fortalice of Verneuil, and by which the routiers had subsequently come down upon them—the other seemed to be approaching by a strong by-path leading down through the

woods from the higher ground to the rearward of the castle, where there was a small postern gate or sallyport, unprovided with a drawbridge, the want of which was supplied in time of need by a plank run out from the open door and guided across the moat by a rope from the battlements. On this side, not being sufficiently strong in numbers to invest the place regularly, and having neither ladders nor any other engines by aid of which they might hope to cross the deep wet ditch or to scale the blank walls, the routiers had bestowed no more attention, after the first reconnoitring parties had examined, and reported it impracticable.

But now as the Coucy noted the distant horse-hoof, which seemed to be drowned to the ears of the marauders by the nearer clang which was approaching them, then he conceived the idea that reinforcements to the robbers and relief to himself were at once approaching, and in this he was confirmed, when his acute sense of hearing, long sharpened by experience of every warlike stratagem, perceived that the rider, whoever he was, had left the beaten track, probably from fearing its betrayal of his approach, and was making his way through the wood-paths, where the mossy soil gave no tidings to ears that were not awake to particular suspicion.

Without a moment's delay the chief despatched Ermold de Marcy to keep watch on the rearward esplanade, and immediately afterward ordered Henri le Noir, who now as a landholder had received the title of Henri of Verneuil, to arm himself *cap-a-pie* as a man-at-arms, and then to go hold himself in readiness at the postern to admit any friendly messenger, should one arrive, while he himself kept a jealous outlook on the proceedings of the marauders.

It was soon seen that his forebodings were correct, for within five minutes after his sending Ermold to the rear, a horseman galloped down to join the marauders, and was received

with a burst of savage merriment and congratulation that proved him an old and favorite companion.

While he was yet observing what should follow, one of the menials of the place came up requesting the Count de Tankarville, on the part of his young esquire, that he would be pleased to join him at the postern on matters of great moment.

The rider, whose approach they had heard, had shown himself on foot on the farther bank of the castle ditch, leaving his horse picketed in the pinewood, and being recognised by Henri of Verneuil, had hastily disarmed himself, swum the moat, and been admitted at the postern. He was the chosen page of the *Sieur de Floris*, who it appeared in crossing the country in quite a different direction toward *Mirepoix*, had learned that a roving band under the famous, or rather infamous, *Aymerigot Marcel* was on its way with twenty spears to attempt a surprise of *Verneuil*; and suspecting in no wise that this was a concerted movement, and that the castle was already beset, he had sent on his page to warn the people of their peril, and to announce his coming by daybreak at the latest with fifty lances to the rescue.

Even while he was speaking with the page, a loud blast on a trumpet blowing a point of parley, as it was termed, recalled him to the bartizan, and he found there on the esplanade, with a white flag displayed and a trumpeter at his side, the *Green Rider*, who now alone survived of the leaders of the free companions, having succeeded by the death of *Talebardin* to the chief command of the band.

He now summoned the garrison in form, with all the frankness and not a little of the courtesy of a soldier—it was he whom *De Coucy* had remarked from the first onslaught as bearing no disgraceful emblems of butchery or bloodshed, beyond the harness of a man-at-arms, with the green plume and the cognizance of the white dragon on his shield, by which he

easily distinguished him as a Saxon outlaw, said to be a bastard of high descent, known far and wide through France as a free rider by the title of the green esquire, a soldier of much renown in the field, who had never tainted his fair fame by any deeds of cruelty or treason, and whose worst censure was that he had at times associated with those incarnate fiends, Talebard Talebardin and the Rouge Batard.

He now addressing De Coucy with deep reverence, and something almost of humility in his demeanor, announced to him that he had just received the tidings of the approach of Aymerigot Marcel with such a reinforcement of men-at-arms, besides ladders and military engines, as would place the garrison entirely at their mercy.

"He will be here, my lord," he continued, "before midnight; and, believe me, he here, defence is hopeless. However, when Aymerigot is in the field, you may have heard, beau sire, mercy is not either to sex or age—regard is not to beauty or to valor—but torture and violation, the rack, gibbet, and the firebrand, to the bravest, and the fairest. Therefore I do beseech you, noble sir, accept the terms of composition which I offer you, while I have yet the power to offer and you the time to profit by them. March out in all safety and honor, with all your arms and apparel and effects, your mules and horses, men and maids, and the chatelaine of Verneuill, and go whither you will under safe conduct, leaving to us the castle only and the fixtures. Go! only for God's sake and the lady's! Go! beau sire de Tankarville! and I, even I, free companion though I be, will bear witness to the nobleness of your defence, to your undaunted valor, and untainted honor!"

"And what shall vouch that the safe conduct will be respected?" replied the knight, with a grave inclination of his head, as if somewhat moved by the manner of the green rider.

"The honor of an Englishman," replied the free companion, raising his vizor, and showing the fair skin, blue eyes, and auburn hair of his race; "and who shall question that?"

"Not I, good fellow," said the knight. "But now mark me, surrender I may not, nor march out save with lance in rest and trumpets sounding, the charge from any place I have determined to defend. But trust me, sir esquire, in guerdon for this thou hast done, on mine honor! thou shalt die as a soldier under shield by the lance of De Coucy, and not as a robber by the hangman and the cord!"

"Grammercy! for your courtesy, beau sire," answered the other with a smile that was almost a sneer—"and, in requital of it, I pledge *my* word, that you shall be harassed by no treacherous night attack, but we will fight it out to-morrow by fair daylight, with the sun to look upon the deeds of brave men, and the free air to bear their fame upward to heaven; and while I breathe, good knight, no harm shall light upon your chatelaine."

And therewith they parted, to meet but once again, and then no more for ever.

All that day and half of the long night, they toiled in the court-yard, knight and esquire, man-at-arms and vassal, squaring the mighty beams and hewing solid planks, forging stout chains and ponderous hinges, till ere the castle clocks tolled midnight, a new drawbridge lay ready on the pavement, with all prepared to raise it at an instant's notice.

Horses were fed and saddled, armors were polished, weapons ground, torches and cressets were extinguished, and save the count of Tankarville himself, and the warders on the walls, all else lay down to snatch an hour's repose before the desperate affray which all foresaw with the coming dawn.

He, with a dim foreboding of he knew not what, prayed fervently before the altar in the castle-chapel, and made con-

fession, although there was no human ear to listen, no human lip to pronounce absolution.

At one hour after midnight, the tramp of many horses, and the dash and clang of harness, announced the arrival of Aymerigot, and half suspicious of treason, the knight aroused his garrison, got them under arms silently and in darkness.

But for once the routiers kept faith—the din ceased in the encampment, the lights went out one by one, and silence of dewy night fell over tent and bivouac as peacefully as if the deadliest of foes were not almost arrayed beneath it face to face.

An hour later, the Tankarville himself dismissed the page of Floris, as he had come, by the postern, with instructions to bring up his lord with his lances on the rear of the free companions, as soon as might be. Then with the aid of his best men, the great gates were opened silently, the new chains rove through the iron pulleys and hooked to the outer end of the *pont-levis*, which was slowly and guardedly thrust forward, until the hinges fell into their sockets, the huge bolts were driven in, and the bridge, hauled up to its supports, stood as if by magic, even as it had stood the previous morning, when it admitted the brave train of Tankarville.

The night passed speedily, and the gray dawn was nigh, and the watchwords and orders of the freebooters arming in their huts came to the ears of the garrison, but came winged with no terrors, for in the dim, dewy twilight they might discern a lance with the pennoncelle of Floris pitched in the ground before the postern, telling of aid at hand.

The vassals and the half-armed serving-men mustered upon the ramparts, but in the court-yard champed and pawed twelve powerful war-horses, backed by twelve champions all in steel, with De Coucy at the head, his broad banner displayed, and his lance-points erected—while four stout grooms manned the

chains of the *pont-levis*, and stood to the bars of the great gate.

The sun rose, and with a wild, discordant yell, and the barbarous blast of horns and bugles, the free companions formed for the assault, some bearing ladders, others mantelets and pavesses, and covered by a cloud of archers.

Up went the banners of Verneuil and Floris, and awoke the din of the tocsin, the deep roar of the kettledrums, and the clear flourish of the Norman trumpets, seeming to defy earth and heaven.

Then, bearing terror to the souls of the routiers, another Norman trumpet answered, and a tremendous shout arouse—"Floris for Verneuil! Floris to the rescue!"

Down went the drawbridge in their front, and forth, lance in rest, banner displayed, and trumpet sounding to the charge, forth came De Coucy and his men—"St. Paul! St. Paul!"—while down the pine hills, in their rear, poured the fresh lances of De Floris.

Aymerigot wheeled with his own band to meet the lord of Verneuil; the green esquire charged his lance gallantly and well, and met De Coucy fair in full career. His lance caught in the bars of De Coucy's casque unhelmed him, but the knight's spear-point struck the free-rider's shield on the chief, bored through shield, plastron, and cuirass, and breaking in his bosom, hurled him dead to the earth. But the Coucy's charger, wearied and overdone, went down untouched, and rolling over its lord's right thigh, pinned him to the ground, that he could not arise, and the next moment Aymerigot and his party, unable to endure the shock of the lances of Verneuil, passed over him in disarray and disorder, the brigand chief bringing up the rear.

But, as he passed, his eye fell upon the dismounted champion, and swinging his two-handed sword on high, he cut him down

with a ghastly blow, shearing his left shoulder, through plate and mail, almost asunder.

They bore him into the castle, into the presence of the lady he had so long and fondly loved—he had so nobly rescued. They unhelmed him—he was pale, speechless; but his eye was as bright as ever—his senses had not wavered. She recognised him—fell fainting on his bosom—her right hand clasped in his cold fingers, her lips pressed to his own in a last, chaste, permitted kiss, the crucifix of his God before his glazing eyes, under shield, in steel harness, nobly, happily, his great soul passed away!—

He had feared God, loved his lady, held honor ever in his eye—and without a taint on his fame—pure lover, loyal noble, gallant knight—he went fearless and faithful to his last account.

Honor to the brave!—rest to the ashes! Pray for the soul of De Coucy!



EUSTACHE DE SAINT PIERRE ;

Or, the Surrender of Calais.

NIGHT fell on the beleagured walls of Calais ; but, with night, there came to that sad city, none of those sweet accompaniments none of those happy gatherings to the domestic hearth, none of that cessation from the toils and sorrows of the by-gone day, which, even under the ordinary circumstances of human wo, render the hours of darkness a season of consolation at least, if not of absolute enjoyment.

A gaunt and famished multitude, of every age and rank, crowded the narrow streets, hurrying, they knew not to what end or whither, from place to place, in the last stage of desperate misery. Torches and cressets flashed upon knightly crests, and burnished mail ; but from beneath the lifted vizors there glared forth countenances so corpse-like, eyes so glazed and sunken, that one would have deemed the wearers incapable of supporting the weight of their steel harness. And, in truth, so miserably depressed were the hearts of those brave men, so utterly were their spirits prostrated by protracted sufferings and hope deferred, that warriors who might, a few short weeks before, have been intrusted to do battle for a

crown, could now have been stricken to the earth by a willow wand in the hands of a stripling. Ladies were there, of high degree, in whose pale cheeks and squalid dress no human eye could recognise the glorious beauties, for which a hundred lances had been splintered. Princes and paladins mingled and confused with the veriest outcasts of society, all levelled by common calamity to a common humiliation. On the preceding morning they had looked, from their ramparts, upon the camp of their relentless foe; they had seen his sturdy archers revelling in abundance, his knights curbing their pampered steeds in proud defiance beneath the very barriers of the town; they had seen his triumphant navy riding before their harbor—they had turned their eyes into their own blockaded streets, and witnessed sights, that might have shaken the constancy of earth's haughtiest spirits—they had hung over the wives of their bosoms, the babes of their affections, perishing as it were piecemeal by the most agonizing of deaths; they had seen the dogs slaughtered for food, they had beheld the last drop drained from their casks, the last handful of meal wane in their coffers, yet they had still a hope. So long as they could see the countless myriads of their countrymen marshalled upon the distant height of Sandgate, their thousand banners flaunting in the sunshine, they could not dream that they should be abandoned, without a blow stricken or a lance broken, to the merciless wrath of England's Edward. But when the evening sun had sunk upon that vast array, slowly retiring from the hills it had occupied so long in empty circumstance of war, their hearts sunk to the dust in consciousness of utter destitution. It was in vain that John de Vienne, than whom no better knight had ever spurred a horse to battle, essayed to allay the tumultuous terrors of the populace. Dread and despair had goaded them to madness. Subordination was at an end, and,—as if that miserable town had not endured enough by the

sword of the foe, and the yet more destructive agents of pestilence and famine—tumult and rapine were about to wreak the remnant of that once proud community. All the livelong night had the din of arms, fearfully mingled with the wild shrieks of women, the deep roar of the rioters, the groans of the sick and dying, struck terror and compassion to the hearts of the besiegers. But even such a night as that must pass away at length, although its moments may seem multiplied to ages. The first streaks of dawn were scarcely creeping over the horizon, when a trumpet rang from the walls in the prolonged flourish of a parley, and the English watchers could descry, through the mists of morning, a knightly crest nodding above the solitary figure upon the ballium. The word passed rapidly from post to post, and ere it could have been deemed practicable, Sir Walter Manny reined in his panting charger beneath the frowning gateway. Between men actuated by the same high and gentle spirit, although arrayed under hostile banners, few words sufficed. The noble heart of the English knight had long bled within him at the sufferings of his hereditary foemen, and it needed but a word from John de Vienne, to interest him to the utmost in behalf of the beleaguered citizens. Promising his utmost services with his warlike king, he bowed till his plumes were mingled with the charger's mane, then stirring the courage of the noble brute with the spur, he dashed away upon his errand of mercy, the pebbles spurned high into air at every hoof-tramp, and his steel harness glancing like gold in the beams of the newly-risen sun.

“God speed thee, gallant Manny”—cried his admiring enemy as he turned from the walls—“God speed *thee* and pity *us*. But if I know the heart of Edward, thou ridest but in vain!” An hour had not elapsed, before the gloomy forebodings of De Vienne were realized by the return of the Island noble. Long before he came within reach of voice could the French-

man read the purport of his mission in the demeanor of the messenger. The first words of Sir Walter confirmed his darkest apprehensions.

"I bring thee terms"—he said—"noble de Vienne—but terms, alas! such as it grieves me to report to such a knight as thee. Our monarch is a gracious, and a brave—but we have worked him such despite and damage here before these walls of Calays, that by the Holy Paul, he hath been dangerous this seven nights past to all around him. Right hardly have we striven with him to win for ye small favor. Ye must—now, by St. Paul, full sooner would I run three courses against e'er a knight in Christendom, with grinded spear, than be the bearer of such foul conditions—ye must choose out six of your noblest citizens, to bear the keys bareheaded and barefooted, to his tent, each in his shirt alone, with a hempen halter round his neck. So shall he take ye to his mercy, and a short shift to the bearers!"—

For a moment the head of De Vienne sunk upon his polished corslet, and he wrung his gauntleted hands till the blood oozed through the crevices of his mail.

"Thanks," he said at length, in a suppressed tone, "all thanks to thee, Sir Walter, for thy good aid, although it hath availed us little. But tarry, till I bear these tidings to the men of Calays." Without another syllable, he turned abruptly from the walls, forgetting in the bitterness of his spirit, those chivalrous courtesies, which relieved with so fair a contrast, the darkness of that iron age.

It was with an anxious eye, and a brow of gloom that he forced his way through the dense multitude to the steps of the market-house, and there, after a few brief words with the astounded magistrates, during which the common bell rang backward—addressed the assembled thousands, in a voice as calm and clear, as though he spoke of matters of light or pleasing

import. A shiver ran through the concourse, as he began—a hum of intense excitement—and then the falling of a feather might have been heard in a deep hush of feeling that ensued.

“Brethren, and men of Calays,” he began, “I bear ye terms from England—bitter they are and evil terms, but ye will have none others; advise ye, therefore, and make a brief response, and above all things, bestir not yourselves to any wrath or folly; for it may avail ye naught.”

“The terms—the terms—tell us the terms,” burst like the roar of a cataract from ten thousand mouths at once.

“Ye shall choose out six,” he continued, “six of your number, the noblest and the best men of the city, and send them forth to Edward, that he may hang them up and pardon ye!”

Now did such a yell of execration and despair go up to the offended skies, as pealed through that multitude, on the terrible announcement. Cries of vengeance on the head of De Vienne himself, were mingled with bitter curses on the British tyrant, and on the heartless monarch, who had abandoned them to such a fate; while the wailings of women and children formed a terrible accompaniment to the hoarser cries of the men. Arms were again grasped, and torches kindled. “Better to die,” was the clamor, “better to die amidst our blazing houses—better to die, with those we love about us, than to live on terms like these!” The riot was spreading fearfully, and in another instant blood would have been shed by kindred hands, and Calays been a prototype of Moscow; when a noble-looking man, with a broad, high brow, a glance like that of a Narroway falcon, and a port as stately as that of the steel-clad baron, by whose side he stood, calmly uncovered his head, and with a mute appeal of hand and eye to the infuriated mob, restored tranquillity on the moment. “Eustache de Saint Pierre,” was the cry, “Hear him—the father of the commons—hear Eustache de Saint Pierre!” and again the place was still as death.

"My friends and fellow countrymen," he said, "I thank ye for your courtesy, and, if it please our lady, that courtesy shall be requited. Great sin it were and shame, that such a noble people, as be now within these walls, should perish, when there be means to save them! My brothers, I believe that any man shall have great mercy at the hands of our Lord God, who should save this people. Fearlessly therefore and confidently, have I this trust in him, that he will be merciful unto me, as I shall jeopard my life for you. I Eustache de Saint Pierre will be the first to die for Calays."

Strange was the revulsion produced upon the minds of men by his magnanimous devotion. Eyes, stony eyes, that had never wept before, gushed out in torrents. Haughty nobles, contemners of all save men of action, bowed themselves in the dust before him; and the silver tones of women were heard, with the faint trill of infant voices invoking blessings on their preserver. Nor was so noble an example lost—five other burgesses stepped forth at once, to go to their deaths, as it were to a banquet. They threw their rich garbs of velvet on the earth; bareheaded and barefooted, with halters about their necks, they threaded the crowded streets, men pressing around to grasp their hands, matrons clinging to their knees, and virgins showering pure kisses on their brows. The heart of De Vienne choked, as it were, the passage of his voice, and he scarcely faltered forth his prayers to Manny for his intercession with the king.

Slowly they passed the gate, but not a shade of fear or of regret clouded the glorious tranquillity of their features. Had they required aught to nerve their breasts, the sympathy of friend and foe alike might well have supported their extremity. For the island archers crowded with no less veneration around them, than had done their grateful countrymen. Earls veiled their high-plumed helmets as the burghers passed; kind words,

and cheering looks met them on every side. Men never went to die surrounded by such tokens of admiration and applause.

But Eustache and his companions felt no base shrinking from their doom—needed no consolation! They stood before the throne of their revengeful judge, as calmly as they hoped to stand ere long before the tribunal of a far mightier king and arbiter. The heart of the English monarch was naturally kind and generous, but he had lashed himself into unwonted fury, his eyes glared, the foam actually flew from his lips, and his whole frame shook with the excitement of rage. “What, ho!” he shouted, hearing not, nor heeding their dignified but humble petition for grace. “What, ho! our provost-marshal—Hence with the traitors to the block!”

“For the love of Heaven, sire,” cried the gallant Manny, “pardon! pardon these noble-minded men!”

“For your own fame, my gracious master, for the honor of our country, for the name of England, spare them!” exclaimed Derby; nor were these two the only petitions; the most distinguished warriors, the holiest prelates, the proudest peers of his realm, crowded around his footstool, but in vain.

“Ha! my lord—fie!” cried he, gnashing his teeth, “shame ye not, lords and knights, to make this coil for the vile puddle that stagnates in the veins of base mechanics? Vex me no further, lords! For by St. George I will not dine this day, till these have rued their treason! ‘Sdeath,” he shouted in yet fiercer tones, “am I not your king? Silence! For shame!” and without another glance toward the undaunted burghers, he motioned sternly to the door of the tent, “Away with them! Away!”

There was not a brow, in that gallant circle, that was not clouded, not a lip but quivered with vexation, as the reluctant guards prepared to lead them out; but at this awful moment a female form, of rare beauty, rushed hastily into the apartment;

her eyes streaming with tears, and her hands clasped in silent supplication.

It was Philippa, his noble-minded, his adored wife—Philippa the woman-conqueror of Neville's cross—Philippa the mother of his son as yet unborn. She threw herself prostrate at his footstool, pale, not from agitation only, but from the weakness of her interesting situation, yet never did a lovelier, or a sweeter form bow at the foot of man, to bend his stubborn heart to deeds of mercy.

"Dear sir, and gentle husband," she exclaimed, "to do you pleasure, in great peril have I crossed the sea; never have I at any time desired any boon or favor at your hand; but now, deny me not, most noble king and husband, in honor of the Son of the Virgin Mary, I beseech you, for the love of me, and for the love of thy child, which is unborn, I do beseech thee to take mercy of these unhappy men!"

For ten minutes' space did Edward gaze in silence, motionless, and stern, upon that lovely form, and upon those beaming features, eloquent with love and pity. At length his brow slightly relaxed, yet there was no softness in his eye, or tone, as he replied.

"Ha! gentle dame! I would you had been as now in any other place. Yet have you offered such a prayer to me as I may not deny you. Now have it as you will—do with these men as is your pleasure—but let me see their countenances never more."

Hastily, and as if doubtful of his own resolution, he flung from the tent, and, ere a moment had elapsed, was heard shouting to horse, and dashing away at a furious gallop; as if to give vent to his passion at being thus compelled to forego a deed, which executed would have stamped one of the brightest names of English story with the brand of deathless infamy.

THE FORTUNES OF THE MAID OF ARC;

A Superstitious Legend of the English Wars in France.

1428.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY:—ON THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF THE
MAID OF ORLEANS.

IT is not within the compass of argument to maintain that the progress of society, the advance of civilization, and the growth of science, have not, in some degree, affected and even altered the standards, by which men judge of thoughts, principles, and actions, as praiseworthy or culpable—nay! in the abstract, as virtuous or vicious. So, if I be not in error, it is perfectly possible and consistent that, in two different periods of the world, two different constitutions of society, the very same line of conduct in man or woman should call forth the highest admiration, and acquire deathless fame, or awaken criticism only, and be judged dubious, at the least, if not disgraceful.

I might instance the recorded hardihood of Spartan mothers, inaccessible to the slightest touch of womanly or motherly

feeling, a hardihood which it is still the fashion to laud in Fourth-of-July orations as the beau-ideal of patriotism, heroism, and a genuine love of freedom, whereas it was in truth no more than the cold and stupid insensibility of minds unrefined by civilization, unswerved by sentiment, and unsoftened by any of those redeeming graces, which it is said, even among the most barbarous and savage hordes, are observed to relieve the primitive ruggedness of nature in the softer sex—a hardihood, which, were it now affected or put on by maiden, wife or mother of our race, would consign her to endless scorn and loathing, as a woman deprived of the best attribute of womanhood, and differing only from the lost and lowest of her sex as inferior to them in the want of that “one touch of nature,” which, in the words of the great English dramatist, “makes the whole world kin.”

In the like manner, I might adduce the practice—for, among the ancients, before the Christian era, it was a practice, and a time-honored practice, too, among the wisest and the best of men—of deliberate and long-premeditated suicide. For in those days, not to die by his own hand, for one guiltlessly sentenced to the hand of the executioner, or fallen into the power of unrelenting enemies, was certainly regarded as an act of cowardice and dishonor; while self-murder, in a similar state of circumstances, was held an added title to the immortal honor of the sage, the patriot, or the unsuccessful hero.

At a much later period to decline the arbitration of the sword in quarrels of a private and social nature, and, whether in the case of receiving a wrong at the hands of another, or inflicting it at his own, to deny the appeal to single combat, *was* sufficient, nay! in some countries, to this very hour, *is* sufficient, to deprive the highest member of society of all claim to social position, to stigmatize him as a poltroon and banish

him, deprived of caste for ever, from the companionship of men of honor; whereas, it is now the cry of that popular voice, which some infatuated Roman once defined as being the voice of God, that to endure obloquy, calumny, insult, nay! but blows without resenting them, is the best proof of manhood, of gentlemanly bearing, and of a clear and correct sense of honor.

Without entertaining the slightest idea of entering into the discussion of any one of these vexed and disputed questions, I have thought it well to dwell something at length upon the alteration of popular sentiment in these foregoing questions, the rather that in the very person of the heroine whom I have selected as the subject of the following romance, we have an instance directly in point—an instance of conduct on the part of a young woman, which, occurring as it did, in the early part of the fifteenth century, I can not hesitate to pronounce the offspring of genuine patriotism, of genuine heroism, and absolved, in consequence of the mode of thinking and acting in those days, from any censure of indecorum or want of those feminine attributes, to which everything else is now, and most justly, held subservient.

I am the more especially called upon to note this discrepancy, as I might otherwise myself fall under the charge of inconsistency, since in many recent papers, I have taken occasion to express my abhorrence and loathing of those women, who, in an age of gentleness, civilization, refinement, and a thorough apportionment of their appropriate rights, duties, and tasks, to the two sexes, have chosen, in defiance of the laws of nature, the modesty of nature, and the wholesome prescriptions of society, and in obedience to a morbid love of excitement, or masculine lust for power and fame, to undertake the parts, unsolicited and uncalled for by anything of duty or of station, of propagandists, conspirators, patriots, and statesmen; and

have actually so far forgotten themselves as to don, not figuratively, but actually, the breeches, to become colonels of dragoons, and to fight hand in hand among the shock of martial gladiators. Of a truth ! little as I can sympathize with the executioners, the scourgers, as it is alleged, of women, quite as little can I feel for the scourged, who, according to my judgment, having made their election, were bound to abide by the consequences, and having adopted the duties of manhood had no right to complain of finding that they had thereby incurred the responsibilities of manhood also.

It is to her gentleness, to her weakness, and to her alleged incapacity to contend with man in braving the shocks of the world, the inclemency of seasons, the severity of toils, and more especially the brunt of battle, that woman is entitled to the protection, the reverence, and even when perverse and reprobate, to the pitiful clemency and considerate tolerance of man. The moment she assumes an equality of mental hardness, of physical robustness, or of active hardihood and daring, she forfeits the indulgences willingly conceded to the implied weakness of her feminine organization, and having deliberately unsexed herself, may properly and most righteously be judged as one of those among whom she has chosen to enroll herself, not as one of those whom she has deserted, in defiance of every principle of decorum, decency, or nature.

An effeminate and effete, and unsexed man, the Hercules degraded into a willing Omphale, has at all times been regarded with scorn, abhorrence, and that disgust which is felt for reptiles beyond and below the attributes of nature. Men shrink from him with plainly-discovered loathing, and true women shake the contamination of his vile presence from the very skirts of their raiment.

Why is it, then ? why should it be ? How can it be ?—for it is, alas !—it is even among ourselves that the loud-tongued

viragoes, the sword-drawing termagants, who, ashamed of their highest attributes, the delicate sensibilities, the finer organization, the more perfect perceptions, purer motives, holier aspirations, and more admirable powers of their own sex, who in love with the brute force, the fierce ambition, the fiery excitement peculiar to us,

“Pagod things of sabre way,
With fronts of brass and feet of clay”—

who forgetful of all modesty, propriety, decorum, nature, unsex themselves even to the putting on not the garb only, but the feelings of the gladiator, looking on death with wolfish eyes, nay! dealing death with gory hands. How can it be that these, and such as these, can meet with sympathy, nay! but with raptures of applause, triumphs of adulation, not from the men alone—though that were bad enough—but from the women—the sensitive, the delicate, the feminine—would that we could add, the true-hearted women of America.

Even in men, and with a good cause to boot, heroism of the battle-field, is it not a bloody and a beastly business? and if the state of society may not dispense with it, nor the constitution of the human heart deny its thrill of admiring sympathy to the brave man, the strength and daring of whose spirit conquers the weakness of his flesh, and in whom the love of country or of glory is greater than the fear of death—in Heaven’s high name, let us at least limit the license of the sword to the male hero, and doom the woman who betakes herself to so bloody work to a sentence as disgraceful as that which in the male attaches to the coward. It were a just doom, sanctioned by nature and analogy—for each is alike guilty of unfitness to rational duties, of rebellion against the veriest law of nature—and here the woman is the worst sinner, as offences of commission must needs be heavier than those of omission, and as

wilfulness is at all times less the subject of pity than weakness which can not always be controlled.

But, as I have before remarked, there have been ages of the world in which the generally-received opinions concerning duties, obligations, and the appropriate functions and fitnesses of the sexes have been so different from those which now exist, that the historian of modern days is bound to judge of the actions and principles, the characters and conduct of the great and good, as well as of the base and bad, in accordance with the lights which they possessed and the views which these obtained, not as if they had occurred under the clearer blaze of recent knowledge, or under the better-ordered standards of a wiser and more decorous society. So that many deeds may have been done, nay! have been done in the troublous times of the middle ages, which we must admire, must elaborate, must hold aloft, as examples of splendid heroism; though they would now-a-days be stigmatized with propriety as indecorous, and as indicative of feeling and impulses which must be regarded as anything rather than honorable. And again, many deeds, which would now be recorded, with execrations on the heads of the perpetrators, as prodigies of cruelty and honor, must be narrated as lamentable instances of the ignorance and semi-barbarism of general society at that period, but by no means as examples of unusual or peculiar ferocity, or insensibility, or ignorance of the individual. Of the former class are many of the most highly-lauded warlike exploits of the middle ages, many of which are tinged with a degree of hardness, ruthlessness, insensibility, and love of battle, if not of bloodshed, which would be pronounced in the nineteenth century as purely detestable. High-bred and gentle women looked upon strife and slaughter, not with dismay and loathing, but with applause and admiration, and rewarded the most blood-stained homicide with renown and love. The dearest ties of affection

were broken on trivial points of honor. Insensibility to the death of children, parents, wives, nay, the sacrifice of near kinsmen to small points of chivalry, were held claims for honorable note and fame of patriotic heroism. Quarter was rarely given on the field of battle until the victors were weary and worn out with slaying, unless for the sake of immeasurable ransoms, and men of the highest rank, character, and condition, were suffered to languish miserable years in closer duration than the worst felon of our days, if once they were so hapless as to fall into the hands of an enemy as prisoners-of-war.

Of the second class are the judicial combats, the fearful punishments inflicted on innocent persons for witchcraft, magic, devil-worship, and the like, all which absurdities were then more generally believed to be positive truths, and atrocities of hourly occurrence, by the nations at large, from the highest and best to the lowest intellects, than are the truths of Holy Writ accepted as truths by the masses of even the most Christian communities. It is much to be doubted whether down to the fourteenth century there were even ten men living in Europe, from the Danube to the Bay of Biscay, who disbelieved the actual and present agency of the Supreme Being in judicial battles, or of the Evil Being in necromancies, magical murders, false prophecies, and all the fanciful wickednesses comprised under the vulgar name of witchcraft.

In reviewing, therefore, the first class, we must not be detained by the ruggedness, the hardness, the impossibility, nor even by the fierce and sanguinary habits of the times, for attributing the praise of true heroism to many who were in their days, and according to their acceptance of the nature of heroism, true heroes, whatever might be the title which should be justly given to their deeds done now-a-days.

In like manner, recording the events of the second order,

we must beware of attributing individual cruelty and savageness to rulers or magistrates who ordered the infliction of penalties which make our blood run cold, for offences which we know to have no existence, but in the reality of which they implicitly believed; for they were in reality no more censurable than the judge and jury of a modern court is for pronouncing a sentence, or finding a verdict of death, this year, for an offence, which the milder law of another year pronounces worthy only of a more venial penalty.

In both these classes of events and actions so long as the actors have acted up to the standards which their own ages considered best, highest, purest, noblest, they must be acquitted of all blame, and entitled to all honor. It is only where they have fallen below the spirit of their time in morality, or clemency, or virtue, or where they have grossly exceeded it in superstition, intolerance, bigotry, or severity, or, once more, where being themselves endued with clearer lights, purer perceptions, and higher talents, they have used and perverted the less elevated spirit of the times to their own selfish, ambitious, personal, or even patriotically political views.

The heroine whom I have assigned to this romance presents a remarkable case in point, under both the views in question—under the first as regards her character, and the light in which we are to regard her—under the second, as relates to her lamentable and unmerited end.

The first question, as regards written history, has always been decided in her favor, though it is quite certain that according to existing ideas, a woman playing such a part to-day, would receive no higher credit from the judicious or the right-minded than a Marie Ambree, an Augustina of Saragossa, an Apollonia Jagello, or any other high-spirited virago, whom we puff in newspaper columns and praise in after-dinner speeches.

yet never dream of introducing to our wives, or holding up as objects of imitation to our daughters. The second question has as generally been mistreated by historians, and attributed nationally as a peculiar disgrace to England, and individually as an act of unusual atrocity to the regent Bedford, though it is perfectly evident that her fate would have been identical, if her captors had been Frenchmen, and her judges Charles or Dunois, for as the winning side really believed her mission, inspiration, and powers, to be divine, the losers as readily supposed them to be fiendish: and, in truth, the whole of her career is so strange, unaccountable, and marvellous, even apart from the supernatural wonders added to it by the one party, and implicitly received by both, that it would be scarce surprising, if, in much milder and more recent times, and among more enlightened actors, such a course of success were considered by the vulgar minds, of which by the way there are many in every place, as the result of superhuman powers. Nay! I believe that, could such a thing have occurred, as the checking of the career of the French arms, after Lodi, Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena, the total and repeated overthrow of Napoleon, and the rolling back the reflux tide of battle from the Po and Danube to the Seine and Loire, by an Austrian or Italian peasant-maiden, half the consular or imperial armies would have cried sorcery and the other treason, and if taken, she would unquestionably have shared the fate, if not of Joan of Arc, at least of Hofer and a hundred Spanish partisans shot in cold blood as brigands. Nor do I think the case would have been much altered if Wellington had been driven from the conquered Pyrenees to the Tagus by a French paysanne, or the victor of Buena Vista into the Rio Grande by a black-browed Mexicana—at least, I am sure that such events would go further to justify the belief of supernatural agency than any part of the performance of the Misses Fox at Rochester with

their assistant knockers, which are believed by many, of what some are pleased to call "the best minds in the country," to be, not only superhuman and divine, but the best, if not sole convincing proofs of the immortality of the soul. Oh! Plato, Plato, if thy reasonings were well, some of them have been received into most ill understandings.

But to come more directly to the personality of my heroine, it can not, I think, be doubted, whatever hypothesis we may take of her career, that she was a very extraordinary, unusual, and in some sort, superior person. That she was an impostor is incredible, and if, as I doubt not to have been the case, she was a visionary or enthusiast, and perhaps something approaching to what we call a somnambulic or mesmeric personage, she must have had very rare faith in her own mission as a reality, and, what is more, very rare powers of making others also believe in its truth and divinity, to have effected what she did, with the means which she had at her command. For the minds with which, and against which, she acted, were all minds of greatly above average capacity; and yet it appears to me to be very certain that the leaders of both hosts did believe in her real possession of superhuman powers—indeed, I scarcely see how at that day, and in the then state of the human mind, they could have believed otherwise—though the French would of course regard the supernaturalism as a divine, the English as a diabolical agency; for such is the natural constitution of the human mind, the partisans of any cause, which they have once fairly adopted, under whatever views, coming in the end to regard it as the true and Heaven-favored cause.

But in order to get a little more nearly at this, let us see what was the state of France at her appearance, what the circumstances of her success, and what the real extent of her services to her king and country.

About fourteen years before, the tremendous battle of Agincourt, won by the fifth Henry of England, had more than decimated the aristocracy, and completely subdued the feudal military power of France ; all the leading princes of the blood royal, and a fearful proportion of the nobility of the realm had been slain on the fatal field, or still languished in English dungeons. From that day forth, every species of calamity had befallen the unhappy France, the queen-mother hostile to her own son, a minor, the dauphin Charles, the furious factions of the Armagnacs and Burgundians literally deluging the streets of Paris with French blood, province against province, prince against prince, and ever and anon the English profiting by the dissensions and disasters of the enemy, to break in and overrun, and desolate, and take possession, until it really did seem as though the boastful pretensions of the English king were true ; and as though his utmost ambition was about to be realized, when he replied to the cardinal des Ursins, who would have persuaded him to peace : “ Do you not see that God has led me hither as by the hand ? France has no sovereign ; I have just pretensions to the kingdom ; everything here is in the utmost confusion, no one thinks of resisting me. Can I have a more sensible proof that the Being who disposes of empires has determined to put the crown of France upon my head ? ”

And shortly afterward, though the battle of Beaugè, wherein the duke of Clarence fell by the spear of the Scottish champion, Allan Swinton, and Dorset, Somerset, and Huntingdon, were made prisoners, threw a solitary gleam of lustre over the dark affairs of France, it availed not to retard the progress of Henry, who had, in fact, conquered all the northern provinces, and held them in quiet possession ; who was master of the capital, Paris, wherein his son, afterward Henry VI., of most hapless memory, was born amid general acclamations, and almost unanimously hailed as heir to both crowns ; and who had chased the

dauphin beyond the Loire, whither he was pursued, almost in despair, by the victorious and united arms of Burgundy and England.

Had Henry's life been prolonged, it is difficult to conjecture what would have been the end, for he was no less politic as a prince, and shrewd as a man, than daring, skilful, and successful as a leader. But the Disposer of empires, whose fiat he had so recently anticipated, had already disposed of the tenure of his own, much more of his half-conquered and rashly-expected crown, and he was summoned from the captured capital of France, before that throne, where kings and crowns are judged equally, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and the tenth of his reign—a great king, a great conqueror, a brave, honorable, and, in the main, a just and good man. Few men have performed more splendidly, ambitious acts from less personally selfish motives ; few kings have attained such glorious greatness through their own personal action, with less alloy of evil or detraction.

His son, whom he left not nine months old, and “whose misfortune in the course of his life,” to quote the language of Hume, “surpassed all the glories and successes of his father,” succeeded to the crown of his father, and to his claims on that of France ; nor, although minorities are proverbially weak, and the times were turbulent and stormy, did his tenure of the one, or his accession to the other, appear at first doubtful.

Soon after the death of Henry, his rival, Charles VI. died also. He had for many years possessed mere nominal authority of his France, and his life had been as unhappy to himself as disastrous to his country. To his son he left only a disputed crown and a divided country, and that he ever owned the one unquestioned and the other entire, he owed in part to his own high qualities and in part to the character and achievements of Joan, the maid of Arc and Orleans. He was crowned at

Poictiers, Charles VII.; his Paris, and Rheims, the sacred coronation city, being both in the hands of the English. This event occurred in the year 1422, and, although Henry was an infant, and when even he arrived at manhood, little better than imbecile, so splendid was the administration of the protector, the duke of Bedford, and so great the talents of the renowned generals who commanded under him, Somerset, Warwick, Arundel, Salisbury, Suffolk, and the still greater Talbot, that they not only held Guienne, the capital, and all the northern provinces, but pressed the war with vigor in the south and west, so that this position of Charles VI. had become almost desperate, when the disastrous battle of Verneuil, second only in the slaughter of nobility to the fields of Cressy, Poictiers, and Agincourt, reduced him to the last extremity, and to such a state of hopeless poverty and depression, that not only was he compelled to abandon every effort at sustaining the parade of a court, but was scarcely enabled to procure daily subsistence for himself and a few faithful followers.

Just at this moment, some dissensions occurred in the English ministry, and the duke of Bedford was recalled home, his place being ably filled by Suffolk, and, although the duke of Brittany was beginning to look distastefully on the English alliance, and Montargis was relieved by the bastard of Orleans, better known in after-days as the count of Dunois, so little effect did the change of hands appear to have produced on the conduct of the war, that Orleans, the most important city of France, in the possession of Charles, was closely invested and on the point of yielding, while the king himself was dissuaded from retreating into the remote provinces of Dauphiny and Languedoc by the entreaties only of the fair but frail Agnes Sorel.

At this time an incident occurred so strange, and with consequences so extraordinary, that once can scarce wonder at the credulity of a French historian, who, describing the first

appearance of Joan on the scene of history, commences thus : " But at this crisis the Lord, not desiring that France should be entirely undone, sent a woman," &c., &c., evidently esteeming her mission as positive and direct as that of St. John, or any of the holy apostles—nor, I conceive, is it all to be doubted that she herself, and those to whom she revealed her visions, were as confident of her divine inspiration and superhuman power.

She was a poor girl, of the small village of Domremi, near Vaucouleurs, in Lorraine, of the very lowest class of society. She is variously stated to have been a hostler-wench at an inn, and shepherdess ; but of irreproachable conduct, and undoubted virtue. It is said that she had manifested no singularity nor given any tokens of possessing superior genius, until she was seized by a sudden idea that she saw visions and heard voices commissioning her to re-establish the throne of France, and expel the foreign invaders. She first made her way to the presence of Baudricourt, the governor of Vaucouleurs, to whom she declared her mission, and, although he at first treated her with neglect, she at length so far convinced him that he sent her on with an escort to the French court, at the little town of Chinon. Here, it is asserted, that she at once recognised the king, though purposely disguised and surrounded by his courtiers, and that she claimed and described, even to its minutest ornaments, and the place where it had long lain concealed, a curious antique sword, which was found in the church of St. Catharine de Fierbois. Hume, who is ever skeptical, leans to the view that all this was jugglery, not exactly on Joan's part, but on that of the French king and Dunois, who were determined to use her as an instrument ; and to the talents and skill of the leaders, whose tactics he supposed were followed, Joan being merely led as a puppet through the host, he ascribes all that follows.

This appears to me to be in no degree tenable. In the first place, no person can be half-real enthusiast, half-impostor—the one or other phase of character must prevail—the impostor who knows his own jugglery, can not believe in his own supernatural power; the enthusiast who does believe, has no need to have recourse to imposture. Secondly, so general a religious imposture, to which jurists, doctors of divinity, and ignorant, superstitious warriors must have lent themselves, is wholly inconsistent with the spirit of the age, and the character of the popular mind. Thirdly, Dunois, and the other French leaders had been daily and hourly beaten, and had never shown either the talents or the force which they subsequently displayed. Fourthly, it is little likely that on the faith of so shallow and childish an imposture as dressing up a simple-village girl, not only sane but shrewd and wise men, who had not previously ventured to undertake the most trivial sally, now boldly should set armies in the field, carry out enterprises of great pith and moment, and utterly paralyze foes so able as Suffolk, Talbot, Scales, and Falstoffs, by a series of well-directed blows, stunningly delivered and rapidly followed up. Fifthly, it is incredible, that, if the French had been such fools as to try so silly a trick, if a mere trick, the English could be so miserably gulled. And lastly, the empty and useless pageant of the procession to Rheims, the whole distance through the heart of an enemy's country and in the midst of his hostile and undismayed garrisons, can not be accounted for by political, military, or rational grounds, or by any supposition, unless this, that every person of the French army, and of the English army also, was thoroughly convinced of her supernatural power, and irresistible prowess.

This supposition, accounts for the attempt, and accounts also for its success. And such a conviction only could be wrought upon such minds as those of Charles VII., and Dunois, of Suf-

folk, and Sir John Talbot, by a person who did really possess extraordinary talents, extraordinary enthusiasm, and did really perform extraordinary things. No one now believes that Oliver Cromwell really heard a voice, at the dead of night, telling him in his obscure boyhood that he should be "not king, but the first man in England," nor is it probable that John Hampden then believed the vision, but he did believe the enthusiasm, and did believe the fact, as he told Sir Philip Warwick, that "yon sloven would be the greatest man in England." The belief made the enthusiasm of the man—the enthusiasm of the man made the belief of the followers, and the enthusiasm and the belief excited, made the imagined vision to come to pass in a palpable fact.

The facts are that she relieved Orleans, in the first place giving up her own opinion to the advice of Dunois, hers being the more daring council—that she then threw herself into the city, marching, according to her own plan, directly through the English lines, the hitherto victorious Britons, before a dozen of whom hundreds of French had been daily flying in panic terror, not daring to attack her—that she stormed the lines of Suffolk, and utterly defeated his whole army with prodigious loss—that, then, following up her successes, she stormed Jergeau, whither the regent had retired, carried the town by assault, Suffolk himself being obliged to surrender himself, and that a few days after, she again attacked the rear of the late victorious forces, with such headlong valor, that the redoubted Falstoffe fled like a poltroon before her, and was deprived of his garter for cowardice, while Talbot and Scales were made prisoners, and the whole army and cause of the English utterly disorganized and lost.

These are not the acts of an impostor, nor of men palming an enthusiast, in whom they did not believe, on inferior minds. Where did Charles and Dunois gain the audacity, the

skill, and the fortune to recover all that they had lost in fourteen years, in as many days—where, indeed, if not in the conviction that Joan's enthusiasm, visionary possession, and energetic will were indeed of Heaven, and themselves consequently destined to be victorious?

The rest of her career is explained yet more easily on the same hypothesis. She next declared that her further mission was to conduct Charles in triumph, at the head of a small force, to Rheims, across one half of the breadth of France, and there to crown him with the due ceremonial of the kings of France; and this, too, she accomplished without a banner raised, a trumpet blown, or a spear couched against her. The attempt justified the success, for the very rashness of the undertaking and inadequacy of the object increased the panic of the English. But in what possible light must we regard the statesmen and warriors whom Hume believes to have been the moving actors of this wonderful drama? If we believe them, when it was their business to have hunted the invaders from post to post while their panic was fresh upon them, until they left the land they had so long held as their own—if we believe them, I say, at such a time, to have risked all they had won, and their army and king to boot, for the sake of a mere empty pageant, which might well have followed, but absurdly preceded the conquest of the enemy.

This done, Joan declared her mission ended, her powers revoked, and made public her desire to resume the dress of her sex and her former condition. She was overruled, and a few days afterward taken in a sally from Compiegne, by John of Luxembourg, and transferred to the duke of Bedford, by whom she was delivered over to the ecclesiastical power, tried by a court of bishops at Rouen, in which only one Englishman sat, and sentenced to be burned to death as a witch. Assailed on all sides by doctors and divines, by promises and

threats, and naturally and consistently doubting, from her fall, the origin of her former successes, she declared her visions to be illusions, and her powers impostures, and her sentence was thereupon commuted. Having, however, resumed male habits, said to have been purposely thrown in her way, and again returned to her former belief in her supernatural inspiration, probably from the idea that the male habiliments were supernaturally sent to her, she was adjudged a relapsed heretic and magician, and was cruelly, but in direct accordance with the notions and ideas of the age, burnt to ashes in the market-place at Rouen.

I see no cause to agree in the belief that any peculiar cruelty excited, or that any political tactics prompted either Bedford or her judges, nor that it was any "pretence," as Hume terms it, "of heresy and magic," by which she was consigned to the flames; but that it was as full a belief on the part of her slayers that she was a foul and fiendish wizard, as her own conviction, and that of her followers, was full and certain that she was a messenger of Heaven.

Heroine and enthusiast she was, spotless of life, dauntless of courage, hapless of death, but most fortunate of glory—certainly an agent and minister of Providence, not by divine mission, but by the working of natural causes—for she redeemed the throne of France to its native owners, never again to be seriously disputed by an English claimant. Few heroines have a fairer title to the name, and none a fame more spotless.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSION.

"Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?
Thou with an eagle art inspired then.
Helen, the mother of the great Constantine,
Nor yet Saint Philip's daughter, were like thee.
Bright star of Venus, fallen down on earth,
How may I reverently worship thee enough?"

KING HENRY VI.

THE destinies of France were at the lowest. From the rapid waters of the Rhine to the stormy coasts of the Atlantic, from Calais to the heights of Jura, there was but a single thought, a single terror among the inhabitants of that fair and fertile kingdom—the English! the victorious English! Never, since the days of Charles the Bold, when the roving Northmen had moored their galleys on the coast, and erected their raven-standards on the conquered walls of Neustria—never had the arm of foreign invader so paralyzed the efforts, so overawed the high and cheerful courage of that warlike people. Paris herself was garrisoned by the victorious archers of the Ocean Isle, and scarce an echo throughout the western provinces but had sent back the twanging of their bows and the deep terrors of their Saxon war-cry. Force and guile had hitherto been tried in vain. If, for a moment, at the death of some bold leader on the field of his renown Fortune had seemed to smile, it was but to efface the recollection of that transitory gleam in the dark sorrows that succeeded it. Salisbury, indeed, had fallen; but, in his place, the stern and politic Bedford, than whom a wiser regent never swayed the

terrible engine of military power, lorded it over the crouching natives with equal ability and tenfold rigor; nor could the united force of France and Scotland, the emulous and well-matched valor of Douglas and the bold Dunois, effect more than a temporary check on men to whom battle had become the very breath of life, and victory the certain consequence of battle.

It was at this fatal period, when, the English lion "camped in gold" over the subject towers of every town or castle from Brest to Calais—when the feeble garrison of Orleans alone maintained a protracted resistance—the resistance of despair—when the battle of the Herrings had put an end, even in the boldest spirit, to the hope of raising that last siege—when the trembling parliament was convened at Poitiers, and the court dwelt, shorn of half its honors, in the petty town of Chinon—when the aisles of Notre-Dame were polluted by mass and requiem chanted in the strange dialect of the invaders. It was at this stormy period that the sire de Baudricourt sat alone in his ancient chateau of Vancouleurs. Night had already closed around, and the small turret-chamber, in which he sat, was dark and gloomy; but not more gloomy nor more dark than was the visage of the stern old governor. No lights had yet been brought, and the embers of an expiring fire scarce threw their fitful illuminations beyond the jambs of the waste and tomb-like chimney. A table covered with a faded carpet, and strewn with two or three huge folios, treatises on the art of war, and several rude scrawls, the nearest approach to maps of which that remote age was capable, occupied the centre of the chamber; and beside it in a high chair of antique oak, the tall, spare form of the old warrior, his arms folded and his teeth set, brooded over the misfortunes of his sovereign and of his native land. A loose robe of sad-colored velvet, gathered round his waist by a broad belt of buff

from which protruded the hilt of a long and formidable poniard, and a bonnet of the same materials carelessly thrown upon his time-blached locks, composed his present attire ; though at a few paces' distance from his seat, a heart-shaped shield, dented by many a shrewd blow, and a huge two-handled espaldron, at least five feet in length, on which might be traced, even through the growing darkness, as the red glare of the wood-fire rose and fell in transient gleams upon its corseleted hilt and pondrous blade, the stains of recent slaughter, together with a crested burgonet and shirt of linked mail, lying in confusion in a recess formed by an embrasure, proved that the sire of Baudricourt had not as yet neglected the practice or the theory of war, nor forgotten in his old age the lessons of hard experience, which he had been taught in the well-fought, though fatal field of Agincourt, and many a disastrous battle since.

The shades of night fell darker yet and darker, the clash of arms without, and a repeated flourish of trumpets, mingled with the booming of the kettle-drums, announced the setting of the watch, but failed to arouse the old man from the stupor, which, it would seem, had fallen on his usually elastic and energetic spirit. There he sat alone in the deepening gloom like some desolate and foiled magician, forsaken by the very friends who had ministered to his success, but ministered only to precipitate his fall, gazing with a fixed and stormy eye upon the vacant darkness. A quick step was heard without, the fastenings of the door jingled beneath the pressure of a hasty hand, the creaking leaves flew open with a jar that might have roused a thousand sleepers buried in the deepest slumbers of the flesh ; but his were slumbers of the mind, nor did he start from his chair until the light and reverential touch of the squire, who stood beside his elbow, had thoroughly dispelled the waking dreams which had so completely enthralled his mind.

"Damian," he cried, as soon as he became aware of the intruder's presence, "Damian, what wouldst thou? hast thou more ill-tidings for our ear? For, by my faith, all tidings have been ill for France, these six months. Alas! alas! poor France! Unhappy country!" and he smote his breast heavily as the full sense of all her miseries flashed upon his mind, stunned as it had been before, and paralyzed by the news of the last defeat.

"Not so, beau sire," replied the squire; "but there is one below urgent to see your valor on matters, it is rumored, of high import."

"Admit him on the instant," was the hasty answer of the impatient baron—"on the instant! Sir, this is no time for loitering; and let those lazy knaves bring lights and mend the fire. This is cold cheer! Look to it, sir, and speedily."

The dormant spark once kindled in his bosom, he did not again sink into despondency or gloom; and, till the return of the squire bearing a pair of huge waxen torches, flaming and smoking in the sudden gusts of wind that wandered through those old apartments, he strode impatiently, almost fiercely, across the narrow floor, the solid timbers groaning beneath his still firm stride, now muttering to himself, now playing with his dagger-hilt, and now pausing awhile to mark if he could catch the footsteps of the new-comer. "They come not yet. Tête Dieu, the loitering knaves. Heaven's malison upon them! And it may be despatches from Poitiers! Would that it were—would that it were! Ma foi, this garrison duty, and these dull skirmishes with the base Flemish hogs upon the frontier, are foul checks on the spirit of a gentleman of France! Would that it were despatches, that old Baudricourt might see once more the waving of the *driflamme*, the ban and *arrière ban* of France, and stand some chance of falling, as brave men should fall, among the splintering of lances, and

the galloping of war-steeds, the fluttering of pennons, and the merry blaze of trumpets; but, mea culpa! mea culpa! what have I said or thought? The best, the bravest knight is enough honored—enough, did I say?—is too much honored, so he may serve his country!"

The muttered soliloquy of the baron was interrupted by the entrance of a dozen of serving-men, not in rich liveries or peaceful garb, but helmed and booted, with sword on the hips, and the spur on the heel, ready alike for the service of their lord in the hall of banquet, or on the field of carnage, and prompt to execute his bidding almost before it was expressed. Fresh logs were heaped upon the hearth, which soon diffused a broad and cheerful glare athwart the Gothic niches and richly-tinted casements; a dozen lights glittered around the walls; the worm-eaten folios and dusty parchments disappeared from the central table, and in their place two massive flagons of burnished silver, with as many goblets of a yet more precious metal, sent back the mingled light of fire and torches in a dozen streams of bright reflection. Scarce were these dispositions of the chamber completed, ere Damian returned, accompanied by the stranger whose arrival had created so much anxiety. This was a low, slight figure, apparently a stripling of some eighteen years, wrapped in a long, dark mantle, which fully answered the purpose of a disguise, as it trailed upon the ground behind, while in front it hung far below the ankles; a Spanish hat, much slouched over the face, with a black, drooping feather, concealed the features of the wearer as completely as the mantle did his form. Entering the turret-chamber, the figure advanced quickly for about three paces, then, without uncloaking, or even removing his hat, although the stately baron had uncovered his locks of snow, in deference to his guest, turned abruptly to the squire, who had paused upon the threshold, motioning him to retire.

"Not I, by Heaven!" muttered the favorite attendant; "not I, and that, too, at a nameless and most discourteous stranger's bidding."

"Damian!" exclaimed the old baron, with a stern and solemn emphasis, "Damian, begone."

"My master!—my honored, my adored master," cried the squire flinging himself at the feet of the lord he had followed in many a bloody day, and wetting his buskins with honest tears—"anything!—anything but this! Bid me not leave you—and alone with yon dark stranger. Bethink you, sir, for France's sake, if not for Damian's, or your own—bethink you! It is scarce three months since the bold knight of Bracquemont was murdered—basely murdered—on his own hearthstone, and by a nameless guest. Who knows not, too, of the captal de Bûche kidnapped in his princely hall, and borne from the midst of his own retainers to an eternal dungeon? Let me stay with you, beau sire; a Villeneuve has no ears to hear, nor eyes to see, nor hand to strike, save at the bidding of a Baudricourt."

"This must not be, good Damian," replied the knight, but no longer in accents of anger; "this must not be! Your fears for me have overpowered your wonted pénétration. See, 'tis a stripling—a mere stripling! Why, this old arm could quell—hath quelled a score of such, and thought it light work, too, good Damian. So! my faithful friend. Is your old lord so fallen in your estimation that you dare not trust him to his own good blade against a single boy? Why, I have known the day you would have borne our gage of battle to Roland, and pledged your hope of golden spurs upon our battle! Leave us awhile, good Damian! It needs not this—away!"

Reluctantly and slowly did the trusty squire withdraw, keeping his eye fixed on the dark cloak and slouched head-gear, which seemed so suspicious to his loves or to his fears, and

his hand griping the hilt of his short, sharpestoc until the door closed upon him; and even then he stood at a short distance, watching, as the greyhound straining in the slips, when the slow-hounds are making the coppice ring with their deep bay-ing, to catch the slightest indication of tumult or disturbance in the chamber of his lord, that he might fly to his aid, and, if not rescue, at least die for his benefactor. With a keen eye, and watchful, if not suspicious spirit, the old knight scrutinized the motions of his guest. Before the jarring of the ponderous door had fully announced that they were alone, the plumed hat was cast aside, revealing, by its absence, a well-formed head, covered with a profusion of black and silky hair, hanging in short but massy ringlets, far down the neck of the stranger, and a set of features which might well have passed for those of a beautiful girl, but which might yet belong to extreme youth and delicacy in the other sex. The brow was broader and more massive than is often seen in women, and the eyes, though fringed with long and lovely lashes, had an expression of wild and almost ecstatic boldness; the rest of the lineaments that met the eye of Baudricourt were regular and delicate, even to effeminacy, in their chiselling.

"In God's name, what art thou?" cried the stern warrior, losing, in the wonder and excitement of the moment, all the cold dignity and hauteur of his wonted mood. "Maiden, or page, spirit of the blessed, or dark and evil fiend, I know not, and I care not, speak? Stand not thus, I do conjure thee—speak?"

The mantle fell slowly to the ground, and a female form of exquisite proportions, though somewhat lofty for its years and sex, stood palpably before him. The dress had nothing to create even a moment's attention: a dark, close robe of serge, gathered about the waist by a broad, leathern girdle, and sandals of the chamois hide, and no more; but in the attitude, the

supernatural expression of the features, the hands uplifted, and, above all, the penetrating glance of the full and flashing eyes, there was much, which, in that age of mystery and superstition, might well have led the governor to deem his visitant a being of no mortal origin.

"Thou art a lover of thy country," she said at length in harmonious, but slow and solemn tones, "a faithful servant of thy king, a fervent worshipper of the one living God? I tell thee, sire de Baudricourt, that by the special favor of the last, thou shalt save thy native land from the fury of the invader, and seat thy monarch once again upon the throne of his forefathers. This shalt thou do. Swear only to follow my commands, the commands of thy king, thy country, and thy God?"

"And who art thou to speak thus boldly of the will of monarchs, and the destined mercies of Almighty power?" cried Baudricourt, recovering somewhat from his first surprise, and becoming rapidly incredulous, nearly to the same degree in which he had lately been the contrary.

"I might say to thee, as He once said to his doubting servant in the wilderness, I AM, and, did I speak the words, 'twere parricidal sin in thee to doubt them. But though thy flesh is weak and faithless, thy heart is true and loyal; therefore, I say to thee, I am the Maid of Arc, the Maid of Orleans that shall be, and thence the Maid of Rheims. In me hath God raised up a savior to his bleeding country, a deliverance to his people!"

"Tush, tell me not! Heaven chooses other messengers, I trow, than such as thee to work its miracles! Nor would thy slender form bide long the brunt of Suffolk's levelled lances, or Bedford's archery!"

"Ha! Doubtest thou the will of the Omnipotent?—doubtest thou that He, who chose the son of the humble carpenter to be his Son, is the anointed King and Savior of the universe?—

doubtest thou that he can turn the frailty of the weakest girl into an engine ten thousand times more mighty than the practised valor of the bravest veteran? Me! me! has he raised up, and, spite of thee, old warrior, I will save my country! And thou, whose patriotism, whose loyalty, and whose religion, are but a mockery and a lie, thou, too, shalt see the glories thou hast presumed to doubt!"

"Sayest thou?" shouted her enraged host—"sayest thou so, wench? By Him that made us both, but that I deem thee mad, dearly shouldst thou rue thy contumely!"

"Even as I entered," was the calm reply—"even as I entered, thou didst frame a wish to perish, as a brave man should, upon the field of glory."

"Knowest thou that?" he gasped; "then is the fiend, indeed, at work here!"

"Listen, and thou shalt hear. But three nights since I was a peasant-maiden without a care or thought beyond my humble duties, and my innocent, though happy pleasures. Now am I a woman, indeed, but a woman inspired with that high and holy inspiration that armed of yore a Jael, and a Deborah, and a Judith, against the mailed oppressors of their country and their God. But three nights since, a voice came to me in my sleep—a mighty voice, loud as the rolling thunder, but sweeter than the breeze of summer—"Slumber no more," it cried. 'Arise! arise! thou humble one that shall be mightier than the mightiest, arise!' it cried in tones that still ring in my mortal ears, like strains of unforgotten music, 'thou shalt save thy country!' I started from my sleep, and there they stood—there, beside my lowly pallet—mother of the blessed Jesus, meek and gentle, in her exceeding beauty, and with a pure and holy fire in her deep-blue eyes, that spoke of immortality, bright and all-glorious, and eternal! And by her side there stood a mailed and helmed shape of glory; but his arms were of a fashion

not like thine, for his limbs were naked in their strength, and his face unshaded by the vizor, a planet-star gleamed on his kingly crest, and a broad cross of living lustre flamed on the buckler of the great archangel, and they held converse with me in that low and solitary chamber—high, but voiceless converse—and they told of the things that were, that are, and that shall be hereafter! Then was I unlearned and rude-spoken. Now, blessed be they that gave, can I speak many and great things; and now I say to thee, as it was said to me—‘Arise! Do on thy arms of steel, and mount thy destrier, summon thy vassals, and display thine ancient banner, the Lord doth lack thy services! and—’”

“And for what?” interrupted the impatient veteran—“for what shall I do on my armor, and erect the banner of mine house—at whose bidding?”

“To speed the messenger of victory, the deliverance of France, to the king—even to the king—thou hard of heart, and stubborn, that I may say to him the words of Him who sent me—‘This do, and thou shalt live!’”

“Away!” was the reply. “I will not don mine harness, nor bestride my charger—trumpet shall not sound, nor banner wave this night.”

“Ere an hour shall go by,” the maiden again broke in with clear, unfaltering voice—“ere an hour shall go by, thou unbeliever, trumpet shall sound, banner shall wave, and at thy bidding! and thou shalt don thine arms, and rein thy puissant steed at my command, and His that sent me. I talk not to thee of glory, or of loyalty, for it were of no avail. I talk to thee of Power! Power which made thee—as it made the fiends—made thee, and may destroy.”

“And by that Power I swear!” he shouted—

“Swear not at all! but hear me. Since all other methods fail, hear me and tremble. By the immortal soul of her whose

• mortal body thou didst destroy, warping her purest and most womanish affections to thine unholy will and her destruction, I bid thee follow and obey. Not that the works of Heaven need the aid of men, but that all earth may know the arm of Heaven by the union of a scarlet sinner, such as thou, to a maid, as I am, humble, but, as I am—all glory be to Him!—holy and innocent, wilt thou obey me?"

"Never! never! I mock thy power, scoff at thy words. Thou knowest not—none ever knew."

"Knew not the clear and glassy waves of the Garonne, which thou didst render loathsome as the charnel-house? Knew not the high and holy stars that heard her cries for mercy? Knew not the Sitter on the Throne, the Maker and Judge of men and things? Knew not the Almighty Shepherd the fate of his still loved, though erring child? Knew not the blood of Agnes de —"

"Speak not her name!—speak not her name! Slay me—do with me as thou wilt—but, oh! speak not her name!" And in a paroxysm of agony and shame the old man dashed himself at her feet!

"Rise up and do my bidding." And he arose, silent and submissive as a chastened infant; and banners did wave, and trumpets ring that night. Torches and cressets flashed through Gothic armory and vaulted stable. Horses were saddled, and their steel-clad riders mounted beneath the midnight moon. The drawbridge fell, and hollowly did its echoes sound beneath the trampling feet, as, followed by knightly crests, and noble banners, and with that proud old governor, a willing vassal at her bridle-rein, the Maid of Arc rode forth on her first path of glory.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCE.

Reignier.—Fair maid, is't thou wilt do these wondrous feats?

Pucelle.—Reignier, is't thou that thinkest to beguile me?

Where is the dauphin?—Come, come from behind;

I know thee well, though never seen before.

Be not amazed, there's nothing hid from me!

KING HENRY VI.

THE sun was some three hours high, on a bright September morning, when the rich meadows, lying to the southwest of the Loire, were disturbed by the merry shout of the falconers, and the yelping cry of their busy spaniels. No tract of country could possibly have been found more suitable to the princely sport, designated in the quaint language of the day as the *mystery of rivers*, than the broad, verdant plains, through which that noble stream rolls on its downward course from the antiquated spires of Blois, even to the Western ocean. The smooth velvet turf, free from the slightest obstacle of fence or barrier, was as perfectly adapted to the reckless gallop of the sportsman—who, with eyes turned heavenward, intently gazing on the towering flight of his gallant falcon, must dash onward free of rein and fearless of heart, at desperate risk to life and limb—as were the rushy margins of the broad river and its hundred tributaries to the food and sport of the aquatic birds, that afford to him his keenest pleasure. The party, which had sallied forth, as it would seem, on this delicious morning, from the neighboring walls of Chinon, consisted of five mounted cavaliers, with a dozen grooms and servitors on foot, some bearing frames on which to *cast* the falcons; others with lures, and

hunting-poles to beat the thickets, and not a few with dogs of almost every denomination, straining and panting in the slips. The falconers—all gallantly mounted, and all treading their fiery horses, now chafed into unusual ardor by the excitement of the sport, with that peculiar ease and mastery, which was then indicative in a high degree of noble birth and knightly bearing—would have appeared to a careless observer, to be equals in rank and station. But on a closer scrutiny it must have been perceived, that, although arrayed for his rural occupation in the simple garments of a sportsman, one of the party was of no small dignity, perhaps of no small power. This was a youth, whose age could not have exceeded the twentieth summer, tall of his years, well-formed, and even elegant in his proportions. His black velvet *tocque*, with its single heron plume, set jauntily on the side of a well-shaped head, suffered his long, light hair to float over his shoulders in loose curls, while it threw no shadow over his bold, and speaking features; an eye, darker than was warranted by the color of his hair, with brows of the same shade, straight and decided, lent an expression of sternness to his lineaments, which was belied by the sweet and winning smile that would light them up at intervals, as an April sunbeam would gleam upon the edges, and clear away the gloom, of an equinoctial storm-cloud; his nose was prominent, and slightly aquiline; his upper lip shadowed by a small mustache, and his chin, contrary to the custom of the age, closely shaven, and betokening, in its square and clearly-cut outlines, resolution, and manliness of purpose. Altogether, it was a countenance which women would adore, and men might reverence; there was a mixture of voluptuousness and hardihood, of gentleness and dignity, such as unite but rarely in the features of a single individual, and which, as certainly as they do so mingle, betoken the existence of no common character. His garb was a close tunic, or jerkin, of forest-

green, furred deeply at the cape with minever, tight hose of snow-white chamois leather, with falling buskins of russet, and long spurs of solid gold. On his right hand, covered by the peculiarly-formed hawking glove, sat a Norway falcon of the choicest breed, unhooded and ready, as its clear, wild eye announced, for instant flight; while by the slightest motion of his left, he turned and wound the beautiful animal he rode, with an ease that almost savored of the magic. As widely different in appearance from this gay youth, as was his heavy coal-black charger from the slight Arab of his comrade, was the knight who rode at his right hand, and from whose tones and demeanor, even more than from his words, the station of the other might be conjectured. His stern, and hard-favored countenance, scorched to almost negro blackness, from exposure to the vicissitudes of climate—his harsh, black hair, clipped short upon his swart brow—his strong features, and forehead, almost rendered callous by the pressure of his *cerveilliere*—and yet more than these, his deep chest, thin flanks, limbs of gigantic muscle, and bony hands, from which the veins and sinews projected like a network of cords, proved him to be a man more used to camps than courts, and, unless appearances were more than commonly deceitful, a tried and powerful warrior. The dress of this dark soldier was, like the person of the wearer, fitted for action rather than for show. A frock of buff-leather, such as was worn beneath the complete panoply of knighthood, and stained in many places by rust, with the rim of a *jazeran*, or light shirt of chain-mail, peeping above the collar, high boots of heavy leather, and a bonnet of scarlet cloth, with a long drooping plume, worn without the slightest decoration, completed his personal attire; but on one side of the saddlebow, hung a bacinet, or open helmet, of highly-polished steel, without crest or burgonet of any kind, while from the other was slung in its leathern case, a heavy, double-headed battle-axe.

“By Heaven! Dunois,” cried the young cavalier, in tones that rung like tempered steel, “by Heaven, but the free morning air of our *belle France* smells fragrantly, after the musty vapors of yon dull garrison, in which we have been pent so long. And thou, old croaker, wouldst have cooped us up yet longer in its dungeon walls with thy perpetual caution. Confess thyself in fault, my paladin; here are we within some five leagues of the outpost of those dogged islanders, whom God confound, and not a sound or sight of peril hath disturbed our sport! By the head of Charlemagne, I have a mind to beat up their quarters, this blithe morning. How say you, cousin mine, shall we five cavaliers ride on and break a lance in sport with these knights of England?”

“May Heaven forefend,” replied the renowned warrior, to whom he spoke, in a voice so deep and sonorous, that it was almost startling, when compared with the appearance of the speaker, “may Heaven forefend, your majesty should be put to such necessity; but little would your hunting-sword, or, for that matter, my good battle-axe, avail against the espaldrons and lances of Bedford’s chivalry. And, now your majesty has given me permission, I do beseech you turn your bridle-rein; there is frank courtesy among the prickers of yon island host, and by my faith if we fall in with one of their videttes, it may go hard with us to scape a lodging in their tower of London. Methinks, since Azincour, there have been princes of the blood enow within those fatal walls, that your majesty should not seek to share their dwelling, unless, *tête Dieu*, it please you to prove the *politesse* of their sixth Henry. Methinks, he scarce will change your highness’ platter, and wait your bidding on his knee, as did the black prince at Poitiers, that of your grandsire John.

“Ha! By mine honor, but they come! lo there! yon cloud of dust, and yon dense plump of spears beneath a knightly ban-

ner! Ride for your life, my liege; spare not to spoil your horseflesh; ride for your liberty and life! I go to check their progress! Reignier, attend the king; and ye, Vendôme and Bourcicaut, tarry with me!"

"Not so, fair cousin of Dunois," replied the noble boy, as calmly as though he were declining an invitation to a banquet, "not so! Most base it were and craven, that I, who by my waywardness, have brought ye into this great peril, that I, Charles of France, should purchase a rascal freedom by the blood of my best counsellor, and bravest knight. We will fight, or flee together; which shall it be; say Bourcicaut, spurs or the sword! Ha! Reignier, Vendôme, speak!"

But, while he was yet speaking, Dunois had changed his bonnet for the trusty casque, loosed his cross-handled sword in its scabbard, and grasped his axe. He listened with a grim smile to the young monarch's answer, and, dropping the heavy weapon into the hollow of his bridle-arm, flung out his right hand impatiently toward the other courtiers—"This is no time for boys' play. France will be lost, an' we stand parleying thus; yon spears are within a brief mile of us now—seize on his highness's rein, De Bourcicaut; away with him—no time for courtesy—force him from the field, brave sirs, and he will pardon the discourtesy in guerdon of his safety!"

It was, perhaps, a task of greater enterprise and daring, to those high spirits, to lay hands upon the person of their sovereign, than it would have been to rush, in their garments of peace, against the levelled lances of the English skirmishers; undoubtedly it was a deed which manifested in a higher degree their resolution and devoted attachment. In an instant it was done: Bourcicaut and Vendôme seized his reins on either hand, and, Reignier striking the monarch's Arab sharply with his riding-rod, all three dashed off at a pace scarcely inferior to that of the swallows, a few of which lingered in the mild

climate beside those gentle waters. "After them, Reignier," cried the delighted Dunois; "after them! I can find play for these dogs, for an hour, with my single arm, and ere then, if ye spur sharply, ye can bring me succor; and hark thee, by yon clump of elms, there on the river's edge, I marked, as we rode by, a boat at moorings—put but the Loire between us, and ye are in safety! Farewell! Away!"

And without another word, actuated by the same noble spirit, the two gallants parted—the one, as he believed, to rush on certain death; the other, harder to him than death, to leave a tried and valued comrade to cope, single-handed, with a host. But duty—ay, and more than duty—imperious honor called, and they obeyed!—the one in all the triumphant joy of confidence and valor, for in those iron days there was no consummation so devoutly to be prayed for, as a death under shield, and in a rightful cause; the other, downcast and sorrowful, but still determined.

Resolutely, almost fiercely, had the young king struggled at the first, charging his attendants by their faith, their allegiance, and their honor, to desist; nay, he had unsheathed his hunting-sword, and threatened those devoted men with death. "We can die," was the brief but reverential answer—"we can die, if so your royal highness will it—but we shall die in our duty!" Further opposition was vain, and when they had ridden, perhaps, a mile, his better judgment mastered his impetuosity, and he pledged his kingly word, his knightly honor, to accompany their flight. Often, however, did they pause—often did they turn the head to mark the fortune of their bold defender. For a while, they saw him galloping steadily forward, his helmet flashing to the sunshine, and the outlines of his unblenching form, drawn in gigantic relief against the low horizon, plunging toward the band, that still advanced to meet him, as confidently, though he rode alone against a score of

lances, as though he had been the leader of a host. They saw him for the last time, as they paused to breathe their horses on the summit of a gentle slope, they passed the brow, and he was lost to their lingering eyes. The clump of elms was reached, the barge unmoored, the horses embarked—hands used to the lance and buckler, grasped oar and boat-hook, but no prayers, no violence, could induce the noble Charles to enter. “Never! by the soul of my fathers, never! Thus far have I yielded to your will, but now am I resolved. Here will I tarry till Dunois return, or till my foes have passed yon knoll. If he have fallen, then ’twill be time, and time enough, to flee; if he be yet alive, as, by the Virgin’s grace, I trust he may, we yet will rescue him.” His words bore too much of weight and reason to be denied; but, had they been wild as the autumnal winds, denial had been fruitless. With eyes on the alert, and ears eagerly drinking in the smallest and most distant sounds, that little group awaited the tidings of victory, or of death. Long and keenly did they listen—but no charging shout, no clash of steel, no shivering of lances, came on the light air, that waved the foliage round them.

“Mere de Dieu!” shouted the king, after a pause of deeper and more thrilling attention; “it is the tramp of Dunois’s Olivier—I could swear to his long gallop from a thousand!”

“Not so! not so—that is no single horse-tramp!—it is the foe! the foe!—to the boat, my liege, to the boat *pour l’amour des cieux!*”

“Thy fear for us, and not thy reason speaks, brave Bourcicaut—see ’tis the man himself! Hail, all hail, my gallant Dunois!—How didst thou ’scape the dogs of England?—quick, quick—on board! we will delay no longer!”

“*Pour le coup, beau sire*—we are in safety,” replied the knight. “’Tis old Baudricourt from Vaucouleurs, come with

a score of lances, and a prophetess, Heaven save the mark! to raise the siege of Orleans," and he laughed scornfully.

"A prophetess—ha! Dunois! Is she fair?—and young, Dunois? A maiden, or a grandam?—speak, man—hast lost thy tongue? By all the saints in heaven, but we will see this prophetess!"

"Her favor, I marked not, my liege—nor recked, in good sooth, of it!—The constable of France has other things to look to besides the beauty of young dames.—But she doth speak of visions—doth aver that she can name your grace among a thousand—doth demand a sword, an antique sword, concealed beneath the altar-stone of St. Catharine de Fierbois—doth boast that she will raise the siege of Orleans, and crown your highness with the diadem of Clovis, in the high church of Rheims. Old Baudricourt doth vouch most strongly for her inspiration. Rank mummerly, I trow—rank mummerly!"

"By Heaven! but we would see more of this," replied the prince, not wholly untinged by the superstition of the age. "Where loiters this fair prophetess?—Lead on, Dunois! Lead on our martial Mercury!"

"Nay, but—my liege," interrupted the blunt warrior, "if that you deem it worth the while to speak with this same juggler, what if you don the garb and mount the horse of Bourcicaut—or, better yet, do on the liveries of Hugonet, he is about your grace's years, and not ill-favored—let him mount your gay Arabian, and play king for the nonce! A hundred marks of gold she greets him as the sovereign!"

"Well thought of, by mine honor—it shall be so. Here, Hugonet, thy livery cloak, and boots—soh!—now thine hunting-pole, aye, and the leash of spaniels.—I had forgot the bonnet, and the lures! Methinks if English Henry win our father's throne, that we can earn our bread, indifferent well, as varlet to this island lord of France! Now, boy, don

thou my hunting jerkin, and my russet buskins. — Thou'st buckled on the golden spurs betimes — 'tis a good omen, Hugonet ; who knows but one day thou shalt win them ! — My toque and feather — faith but thou showest a gallant gentleman — and here, take Bright-eye, and my hawking-glove. Buckle this diamond bauble round thy collar, and thou art, every inch, a king. Soh ! Brave Gazelle — stand — stand, good horse, and bear thine honors meekly," and doffing his felt bonnet sportively, the monarch held the stirrup for his serving man. " On — on, Dunois, we fain would try the truth of this your prophetess ! — Lead on !"

" It needs not — here they come," cried Dunois. " Unbonnet yourselves, gentlemen — unbonnet all, save Hugonet — I go to warn old Baudricourt !" and in an instant he dashed forward to the advancing party.

It was a subject for a painter that brief interview. The pretended king, bearing himself worthily of his part, sat a little in advance of the nobles, on the finely-formed Arabian ; while close beside his stirrup stood the true prince, in rude garb and clownish attitude, now playing with the dogs, now gazing with feigned indifference, but real anxiety, at the approaching group. On the other hand, were the old governor of Vaucouleurs bending his mailed form over his saddle-bow in feigned respect, the stately knights behind him, motionless as statues of solid steel, save that the pennons of their long lances fluttered freely in the breeze, and the prophet-maiden, her dark locks floating on the air, her bosom panting, as it were, and laboring with the spirit that worked within, her wild eye flashing with the speed and brilliancy of lightning over every person of the party.

" Come forth," she said, at length — " Come forth, thou Royal Eagle !" — She spoke, not with the bashful rusticity of a peasant-maid, but with a high and free demeanor that might

have beseemed the heiress to a line of sovereigns, waving her hand toward the disguised prince with an eager and inquiring gesture : “ Come forth, thou noble bird — nor let the base and carrion vulture put on thy semblance ! Monarch of France ! I bid thee hail. I, Joan, the Maid of Arc. — Even as thou throwest by those servile trappings, even as thou doest on thy proper garb, so, by the grace of Him who sent me, *so* shalt thou dash aside the proud invaders, so don the crown, and mount the throne, of glory ! ”

“ Maiden, I hail the omen — I accept the messenger — I bless the God who sent thee ! ” cried the enthusiastic youth, tossing aside his disguise, and springing forward in his own noble and natural bearing. Astonishment was painted on the lineaments of all — and even the sneer that sat upon the lip of the dark constable, relaxed into a smile.

“ ’Tis strange,” he muttered — “ passing strange ! — and yet ” —

“ Yet what, proud noble ? — I tell thee I will move the world, but men shall know me for the holy thing I am, and speed me to the duties for which I am ordained. — Knowing of myself nothing, yet do I know all things. I know that thou, Dunois, that thou didst counsel this disguise ; as if a web of mortal texture could cheat the eyes, that see with the pervading vision of the All-seeing. I know that three nights since — even at the hour when first the power and the sign were sent to me — thou, Charles of France, didst sit and gaze from the dark battlements of Chinon, over the mournful murmurings of the Loire ; I know that thou didst raise thy voice, the voice of thy inmost soul, to the Lord — even to the Lord of hosts — beseeching him to nerve thine arm, and save thy people — and lo, HE hath sent ME ! — I know, that, ere an hour had passed away, the prayer and the mournful river were alike forgotten in the dream of luxury and dalliance ; that the ardent aspirations of thy spirits were forgotten, as thy heart beat fast and

hot to the responsive heart of that young beauty—I know that the dark and quiet heavens, which heard and registered thy vow, were banished from thy memory by the brighter heavens that smiled upon thee from the eyes”—

“Enough! enough!” shouted the king, fearful perhaps lest she should disclose more of her knowledge, whether it were indeed supernatural or merely the result of intelligence and shrewd deceit. “Were I as incredulous as the Apostle of old—may he vouchsafe us his most holy aid—I were convinced! To horse—to horse! we will to Poitiers to our parliament; they shall acknowledge thee, and thou shalt lead our hosts to glory! Follow us to Poitiers!”

“Not so, sir king—not so! Mine is a heavenly mission; thine but an earthly bidding. I go to the chapel of St. Catharine de Fierbois, for I must travel in the road of Him who sent me. Beneath the altar-stone there lies a sword—an ancient sword—the weapon of St. Denys, and by this sign shalt thou know it. On its pommel there is a skull of gold, and for its guard five fleurs-de-lis of the same precious metal. Five hundred years hath it lain in that damp grave, but rust may not darken, nor the cold dews of the charnel-house consume that, which the Lord did consecrate. With that sword must I go forth to battle—with that sword must I drive back the foes of France like howling wolves—with that sword must I redeem the diadem of Clovis, to place it on thine anointed brows, even in the high church of Rheims! Follow, nobles and knights, follow *me* rather, to the chapel of Fierbois!”

And they rode on to that ancient shrine, and mass was said by the prior, and anthems chanted by the assembled monks; but neither monk nor prior knew, nor ere had heard, of that mysterious sword. And the altar-stone was moved from its deep foundations, and the bones of the dead were moved, and there, in the dark mould of the grave, found they the sword of

St. Denys, with the skull of gold on the pommel, and the fleurs-de-lis on the guard, and the blue steel bright and burnished, as though it had been forged but yesterday; and the maiden girded it by her side, and cried out in a high and clear tone, "By this sign shall ye know me that I am sent, for is it not written in HIS holy book—'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach terrible things.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECOGNITION.

Alex. Leave off delays, and let us raise the siege.

Reig. Woman, do what thou canst to save our honors,
Drive them from Orleans, and be immortalized.

SHAKSPERE.

IN a vast Gothic hall, within the ancient walls of Poitiers, the parliament of France had been convened, during the occupation of the capital by their brave invaders. They had come together, the peers, both temporal and spiritual of the realm, in full numbers, and in all the gorgeous magnificence of the feudal ages; nor would it be easy to conceive a scene of more exalted splendor than that which was presented by this august assemblage. The long hall, lighted on either hand by a row of tall, lanceolated windows, through which the daylight streamed, not in its garish lines of unmellowed lustre, but tender, rich, and melancholy, through the medium of the thousand hues, in which were blazoned on the narrow panes the bear-

ings of many a noble house ; the clustered columns hung with gigantic suits of armor ; the fantastic carvings of the capitals ; the groining of the vaulted roof, with the bannered trophies of ten centuries swaying to and fro in the light currents of air that played through the hall ; the long central table, with its rich covering of crimson velvet, and the displayed insignia of royalty, the sword, the sceptre, and the mace of Charlemagne ; the throne, with its massive gilding, and its canopy of cloth of gold ; all had been prepared with as much of elaborate taste, as though a victorious monarch were about to receive the congratulations of his assembled feudatories, in the high places of his hereditary dominion. Far different, however, from the splendor which surrounded them on every side, was the expression that sat, with hardly an exception, on every brow through that proud conclave. It was one pervading universal expression of restless anxiety, of universal dismay. Old knights were there, whose beards had grown long and hoary beneath the helmet, which had scarcely left their brows since the distant days of their boyhood ; men who had proved and rued the discipline and valor of the English yeomanry at Cressy and Poitiers ; men, over whom a silent century had sped its course, and left them broken in body, but untamed in spirit, and unsubdued in intellect ; chiefs were there, whose maiden swords had, for the first time, gleamed on the disastrous field of Agincourt—chiefs, to whom the deadly onset was dearer than the voluptuous dance, the maddening clamor of the trumpet more congenial than the minstrel's lute ; but of the hundreds who sat in long array—in ermined robes and caps of maintenance, scarce one in fifty had passed the middle age of manhood. The noblesse of France had been fearfully decimated by the merciless sword of England, which had converted their finest provinces into sterile and uncultivated deserts. Year after year had brought the same dark tidings of defeat

and desolation, of captivity and death. The burgonets of ancient houses, for the most part, pressed the sunny locks of boyhood ; and the task of deliberating on the weal of kingdoms had, for the most part, descended to the gallant youth, more fitted to chant love-ditties in the bower of willing beauty, or to fight with impetuous ardor in the first ranks of the battle, than to frame laws, or to solve nice points of casuistry. A yet more remarkable token of the insecurity of the times, was to be found in the shirts of linked mail, or coats of plate, which were universally worn beneath the ermined garments of the senators — in the concourse of pages and esquires without, bearing each the casque, the buckler, and the weapons of his lord — and in the barbed war-horses, that were led to and fro, in full caparison, beneath the windows of the council-chamber. More incongruous yet would it have appeared to modern eyes, could they have witnessed the highest dignitaries of the church, clad like their temporal brethren, in all the panoply of warfare ; yet there were present at least a score of these literal members of a church militant, who would have been, perhaps, more familiar with the usage of the lance than of the crosier, and to whose lips the banner-cry of their families would have risen more promptly than mass or benediction.

Assembled as these nobles were, ready alike for combat or for council, it would seem that there was yet a something wanting ere they could proceed to business ; impatient glances were thrown toward the sun, that was already riding high in the heavens, and to the throne, which was as yet unoccupied. Nor was this all ; murmurs of disapprobation were beginning to be heard, even among the most volatile spirits of the parliament, while the more aged councillors knit their dark brows and shook their heads, boding no good to France or its inhabitants, so long as its destinies should be swayed by a monarch ever willing to postpone the most serious duties for the prose-

cution of some headlong sport, or of some licentious amour. It was, perhaps, with a view of calling the attention of the court to this strange neglect of the reigning sovereign—for the sway of monarchs was vastly abridged by the power of their higher vassals—that the bishop of Senlis, a tall, iron-limbed, and hard-featured prelate, who wore his cape and robes over a suit of Milan steel superbly damasked with gold, which clanked omniously as he strode to the central table, rose as if to speak. Scarcely, however, had he broken silence, before a cry was heard without—"Room! room! for the king!—room! for the bold Dunois—room! for the prophet-maiden"—followed by cheering so tumultuous that the banners flapped heavily, as if a mighty wind had fallen upon their folds, and not a few of the younger nobles sprang to their feet in astonishment.

In an instant the doors were thrown open; and well might the nobles gaze in wonder at the group that entered. With his wonted impetuosity, Charles had not stopped, even for a moment's space, to alter his attire, ere he entered the presence of his peers—springing from his horse, and casting its rein to the esquire in waiting, commanding his attendants to follow without delay, he rushed into the supreme council of his nation in his hunting-dress, with the stains of the chase fresh upon spur and buskin. This would, however, have called forth no surprise on the part of the peers, accustomed, as they long had been, to the extravagances of the young king, who, though he could, when it listed him so to do, debate as sagely as the wisest of their number, or array a host, with his own lance for leading staff, as soldierly as any, save perhaps Dunois, was just as likely to fling away from business of the most engrossing interest to mingle in the dance or lead the hunt. On the entrance of Charles, indecorous as was the speed with which he strode up the hall, and unsuited as was his garb to the occasion, all had arisen and several of the highest dignity

advanced as if to conduct him to the throne; but when Dunois was seen to pass the threshold with the prophet-maiden supported on his stalwart arm, a general murmur of disgust passed along the crowded benches, and seemed about to swell into notes of deeper and more fearful import. Nor indeed was she a spectacle peculiarly adapted to the scene. In an age when the greatest possible veneration was paid to rank, and when humble parentage was almost deemed a crime, it was scarcely possible that the haughtiest council of Europe would brook the intrusion—even when sanctioned by their monarch—of a mere peasant-girl into their solemn halls of audience. At this moment, too, there was another, and yet a stronger reason for the anger of the peers. They doubted not but that Charles, with a degree of levity which he had never before reached, even in his wildest moments of license, was introducing a paramour to their august presence—a peasant paramour. Yet, had they looked on the speaking lineaments, rather than on the frock of serge and leathern girdle—had they marked the flash of her dark eye, as she gazed around her, unawed by the dignity, and undisturbed by the displeasure of the parliament—had they marked the indignant expression, the curl of her lip, and the expansion of her nostrils, as she caught the sound of some disparaging epithet—had they cared to read the meaning of the deep crimson flush, that rushed over her cheek and brow, they could not, for a second's space, have deemed her a thing of infamy, perhaps they scarcely could have believed her other than a scion of some time-honored race.

It was but for a moment, however, that the tumult—for the manifestation of anger had reached a pitch which almost justified that title—was permitted to endure. The best and noblest of the peers rushed forward, though scarcely less indignant than their fellows, to enforce silence at least, if not respect and homage.

"How now, my lieges!" cried the youthful king, standing erect in the centre of the hall, "have you no warmer welcome for your sovereign than these tumultuous clamors?—methinks such tones were best reserved till we join fronts with England's archery; and then, my lords, will Charles send forth his voice to swell the war-cry of his fathers!—*MONT JOY SAINT DENIS!*"

"But little chance is there, beau sire," interrupted the warrior-bishop, with a freedom of speech that would at any time have been deemed to border upon discourtesy at least, if not on treason—"But little chance is there, beau sire, that France's nobles should be summoned to other conflict than that of the midnight banquet or the morning chase, by a prince who deems it-fitting his own dignity to lead his low-born concubines into the very halls of his high parliament!—And for that matter, little chance is there that they would heed his bidding, even should he, in some wild caprice, unfold the oriflamme, and call his vassals to the field of honor."

"Sayest thou, sir bishop!" shouted the gallant boy, his brow crimsoning with the eloquent blood of indignation—"sayest thou—and to me? Now, by the honor of a child of France, thou shalt account to me for this outrage. Ho! Dunois—summon our guards, and let yon brawler learn if cope and cowl should buckler such a cause as he has dared uphold this morning. Nay, speak not for him, Dunois—nor thou, fair prophetess; for by my father's soul, Senlis shall lose her bishop ere the sun set. Our guards! what ho! our guards!"

The gates were flung open at the monarch's cry; and a dozen sergeants of the guard, in royal liveries, with partisans advanced, and swords already glittering in the sunshine, were seen without the archway. "Forward! my guards," he cried again in a yet louder voice. "Bertrand de Montmorenci, seize yon factious bishop—seize him!" he continued, seeing

some slight hesitation on the part of the officer—"seize him, were he at the holy altar—ourselves will reckon with the mother-church!"

Slowly the guards marched forward, in compact and steady order; and so silent was that assembly, which had but a moment before showed like the ocean billows chafing beneath the tempest, that not a sound was heard, save the heavy tramp of the armed warders, as they advanced to do the bidding of their monarch. The haughty prelate stood erect and fearless, meeting the glowing features and flashing eye of the youthful king with an expression as proud, a port as fearless, as his own. The guards drew nigher, and yet nigher; but, at the very instant when they were about to lay hands on the offender, as if by a common impulse, the whole assembled peerage advanced a pace or two, as if to assert the privilege of parliament; and although no word or gesture of violence had as yet occurred, it became evident even to the prince that the sense of the assemblage was against him, and that a tumult, the desperate nature of which might be conjectured from the determined silence of the actors, must be the result of his persisting in the arrest of his seditious noble. Still there was no touch of fear or hesitation in his noble spirit. "Speak not to me, Dunois," he replied, in a hoarse, low whisper, as his best councillor implored him to be prudent—"speak not to *me*. I am the king of France! and never did king brook so foul a contumely from the lips of subject. No! Let them murder me, if they will, in my own courts of parliament, and write in the records of their house, that the peers of France have deemed it worthy of their own, and of their country's honor, to slay the heir of Charlemagne for upholding his own good name. Speak not to *me*; for by the blessed sun that sees us both, Albert of Senlis, or Charles of France, shall close his eyes this-night upon those splendors, never to see them more!"

As he spoke, he laid his hand on the hilt of his hunting-sword, and advanced in person to seize, with his own hand, the haughty churchman. A hoarse, low murmur ran through the hall, like the shuddering breath that agitates the woodland before the coming of the tempest, but he marked or recked it not—another instant would have unsheathed a thousand swords, and the miseries of that unhappy realm would have been augmented yet more terribly by the mutual strife and slaughter of those, who should have been her best defenders. The bishop still stood erect; and now, confident of the support of the banded feudatories, a smile curled his lip, and he perused, with a half-contemptuous expression, the lineaments of the king as he strode on to seize him, followed by the resolute though still reluctant Dunois. At this critical moment, when another word or action would have given rise to deeds, which never could have been recalled, the Maid of Arc stood forward.

“Forbear!” she cried, in a voice so high and musical that, even in that moment of excitement and impending violence, it fell on every ear with a soothing sound, and arrested every impetuous arm—“Forbear! thou child of France—and thou, sir bishop. Shame!—Shame, that a minister of holy church should be a minister of wrath and evil. Hear me!” she continued, with animation still increasing as she spoke—“Nobles and knights of France hear me, the MESSENGER OF HEAVEN! I have come by the will of THE FATHER, to save the sons of France from the polluting blight of the invader!—I, a peasant-maiden, who lay down to rest, and rose up to labor, with no higher thoughts than of my daily toils—I, Joan of Arc, am sent by the MOST HIGH to lead the hosts, and wield the sword of vengeance! A few short hours since were my words rude, and my thoughts lowly; now, by gift of HIM who sent me, my speech is eloquent, my breast is full of high and glorious aspirations,

my soul is rich with wisdom! Start not, nor doubt my words, for I have proved them! See ye this blade?" and she waved it triumphantly above her head. "This blade—once of St. Denis, now of a mightier than St. Denis? Five dark and silent centuries hath it lain in the mouldering tomb, unknown, unnoted, and forgotten, for it was unneeded! But the voice which roused me from my sleep of ignorance revealed it. The Lord of Hosts hath need of an avenger, and he hath armed her for the field with that miraculous sword, which shall be red as crimson with the proudest blood of England. Nobles and knights, to arms—your king, your country, and your God, call you to arms! Ere six months have elapsed, I tell ye, France shall be delivered. I tell ye that the oriflamme shall float in glory o'er the walls of Orleans. I tell ye that this child of France shall buckle on the sword, and shall be crowned with the crown of Charlemagne in the high church of Rheims—and by thy hands, lord bishop! Princes, and paladins, and peers, I do conjure you by a sign, I do command ye by a power which ye see not, but must obey! To arms for France and Freedom! To arms for France and Vengeance! It is the will of God!"

Strange had been the emotions of those high spirits during the appeal of the peasant-maiden; pride, at first, and contempt were painted on every scowling brow; but as her words waxed powerful and high, as her voice flowed like the continued blast of a silver trumpet, as her bosom heaved with inspiration, and as her dark eyes flashed with supernatural lustre, contempt and pride were lost in astonishment and admiration. She struck the key of their insulted patriotism, and they burned—she spoke to their superstitions, and they well nigh trembled—she asserted the assistance of a power which they must obey; and the proudest, the noblest, the haughtiest assembly of the Christian world heard—and they did obey.

One voice — as she concluded her fervid harangue — one powerful voice sent forth her last words, shouting them as though they were a battle-cry — “To arms! It is the will of God!” It was the voice of the best and bravest — it was the voice of the stern Dunois.

From heart to heart it ran like an electric shock — from lip to lip it pealed — “To arms — for France and Freedom! To arms — for France and Vengeance! It is the will of God!” Louder it rang, and louder, till battlement and turret seemed to rock before the earthquake clamor, and the maiden read the certainty of triumph in the enthusiastic confidence of those she was about to lead to victory.

CHAPTER V.

THE RELIEF OF ORLEANS.

Pucelle.—Advance our waving colors on the wall;
Rescued is Orleans from the English Wolves:
Thus Joan la Pucelle has performed her word.

ALL night long the streets of Blois had rung with the wildest confusion. War-drum and nakir mingled their long rolling cadences with the shrill flourish of horn and trumpet, and the tinkling clang of cymbals. The blacksmiths' forges blazed red and lurid, while the strong-limbed artisans plied their massive hammers to shape and bend the shoes of the huge *destriers*, that pawed and snorted round the smithies. Pages and squires were hurrying to and fro with helms and hauberks, to be polished or repaired for to-morrow's service — wagons laden with wine and wheat, were dragged along the ill-paved

streets, groaning and creaking with their own weight, by the reluctant oxen—ever and anon a piece of rude and cumbrous ordnance, shaped like a cask with bars of hammered iron, hooped into the form of tubes by solid rings of the same metal, was hauled along with yet mightier effort, amidst the shouts of the fierce soldiery.

Still, among all the din and note of preparation, there was naught of riot or debauchery—no healths pottle-deep—no carousings round the midnight watch-fires—no squeaking of rote or gittern—no lascivious dances, or loose songs of courtesan and jongleur!—all was stern, grave, and business-like. Men felt as if they were on the eve of a dread convulsion—of a mighty effort—they passed to and fro, as the exigencies of the time required, with bent brows and long-determined strides; their conversation was in short stern whispers!—The spirit of THE MAIDEN was among them—the very men, who a few short weeks before had been all fickleness and levity, who would have endured death itself more willingly than the curtailment of the least of those licenses, which they chose to call their liberty—these very men now moved about in silent resolution, too full of purpose to leave any room for levity!—They swore no strange oaths, they kneeled humbly at the confessional, they bowed themselves in awestruck adoration before the shrines of their patron-saints!—They were now the stuff whereof to model conquerors—their minds were strung to the very pitch—and therefore they were well-nigh certain of success.

As the night wore away, and the stars began to fade in the heavens, the banner-cries of the different companies, the *enseancies* of ancient houses, and the gathering shout of France, *Montjoye! Montjoye! St. Denis!*—pealed fast and frequently; and at every cry the ready veterans announced their presence at the banners of their following by the national response of

Vive le roi! The great place in the centre of the city was thronged well-nigh to suffocation with armed multitudes. The brave gen-d'armerie of the surrounding districts, mounted on small rugged horses, with brigantines of leather rudely covered by scales of rusty steel, long lances, and helmets without either crest or vizor—Switzers in their massive coats of plate, burnished till every rivet shone like silver; bright bacinets upon their heads, and in their hands short heavy partisans with blades two feet in length—Genoese cross-bowmen in gaudy dresses, and light shirts of chain-mail, their ponderous weapons slung across their shoulders—and above all, the men-at-arms, the flower of France, sheathed from crest to spur in complete suits of mail and plate, and mounted upon steeds of blood and bone proportioned to the weight which they supported; with their tilting lances eighteen feet in length, each having a gay pennon streaming from the head, their axes and maces slung on either hand the saddle, their huge two-handed swords extending, as they sat on their tall war-horses, from heel to shoulder—all these groped beneath the projecting bartizans and around the Gothic cross of the market-place, and partially revealed by the pale moonlight or the ruddy glare of torch and cresset, presented a picture to which the gayest pomp and circumstance of modern warfare are but tame and insignificant.

Day broke at length, and as the expected rays shot upward from the horizon, a loud flourish of trumpets swelled almost painfully upon the ear, accompanied by the distant acclamations of the populace. Then might you have seen the war-steeds toss their heads and paw till the pavements rang, and the riders curbing them steadily and skilfully into the ranks; while the shouts of the harbingers and fouriers—“*Ha! debout, messires! debout!*” and the redoubled efforts of banner-men and esquires restrained them in their ranks, and mar-

shalled them, after much tumult and confusion, in a huge hollow square around the market-place. Nearer the trumpets flourished, and nearer yet—then there arose a cry—a single cry swelled by a thousand voices—“the king! the king!” Ten thousand men stood there, but not a spear clashed, not a charger pawed, not a voice or whisper could be heard in that vast concourse as the leaders entered the place-of-arms.

First came the pursuivants, riding two by two on snow-white horses, clothed in tabards of murrey-colored satin *semés* with *fleurs-de-lis* of gold, and in their hands the bannered trumpets, with the royal quarterings of France glowing in rich heraldic blazonry. Then came Montjoye! the hereditary king-at-arms, in his emblazoned coat, one solid sheet of gems and gold. And after him the bold Dunois, on his black Olivier, sheathed in his plain dark panoply, with the bend sinister of bastardy crossing the arms of Orleans on his triangular buckler, and his vizor at half-spring, showing his calm observant eye and eagle features above the rim of the raised beaver—the plainest and the simplest, though, perhaps, the most rigidly complete in his war-array of all that gallant company. There rode not *there* a knight, on whom the eye of one, who loved like the eighth Henry to look upon a man, would have dwelt with so much pleasure as on the bold Dunois. Behind him came the knights and squires of his body, all armed; and after him a standard-bearer, gallantly mounted, and holding aloft a banner of rich yet singular device. It was a sheet of pure white damask, with a triple tressure of golden *fleurs-de-lis*, but in the midst of there was emblazoned, with the utmost of the herald's skill, a figure, which it would now be deemed the worst profanity thus to mingle with preparations for carnage and destruction—it was the figure of the ONE ETERNAL! grasping in his hands the globes celestial and terrestrial, as when at the instant of creation he launched them into immen-

sity!—Profane, however, and horrible as such a representation would now be regarded, it was then looked upon far otherwise; as the hallowed banner was borne into the market-place every footman sunk upon his knee, every cavalier bowed his crest in meek adoration, every weapon of war was lowered, every banner veiled! *

They arose from their devotion, and before them stood a pair that would have claimed the pencil of a Raphael, or the pen of a Froissart, to represent them justly. On the king's chestnut Arabian—strong enough to be the war-horse of one so slightly framed as she, who reined him in with equal skill and grace—snorting and champing on his bits of gold, as if proud to bear so proud a rider, sat the prophet-maiden! Her head was bare, and her dark locks now streamed to the light wind in spiral ringlets, now fell in heavy masses over her polished forehead; her throat was covered to the chin by her bright gorget; her corslet, cuishes, and greaves, were of azure steel, damasked and riveted with gold; a scarf of white sen-nit fringed with gold supported the sacred weapon of St. Denis, and attached to the cantle of her demipique swung the long lance of knighthood. But it was not the panoply of price, nor the high-mettled charger, but the beaming eye, the glorious intellect, the all-pervading soul, the untaught flexibility and grace of every limb, whether in action or repose, that stamped the peasant-maid of Arc as one of nature's aristocracy.

Beside her bridle-rein rode Charles the Seventh, like his comrade sheathed in armor, and like her with his head uncovered; but his sunny locks and bright blue eye rendered his countenance, if possible, more feminine, on a slight inspec-

* The descriptions of the armor and banners here introduced, are correctly and literally true, even to the smallest details; the former being preserved to this day in the armory of Rheims, exactly as here represented.

tion, than that of the fair being at his side. His coat of plate was, like the maiden's, of the choicest Milan steel, but, unlike hers, was not engraved with arabesques, being covered entirely with a thin coating of gold, so admirably enamelled upon the stronger metal, that no violence could have parted them, and presenting the appearance of an entire suit of golden armor! His buckler was hung about his neck by a thong of gilded leather plaited upon a chain, a plain field of azure with the urgent fleurs-de-lis of France; the barbings of a magnificent bay-destrier, which he bestrode with a firm seat, yet easy withal, were bright plain steel, with housings of azure velvet. Two pages, in common half-armor, with steel spurs and bacinets, but neither crest or vizor, followed, bearing the plumed casques of either rider; and behind these again two others, bearing, one the lance and espaldron of the monarch, the other the buckler and axe of the maiden. The rear of this gorgeous cavalcade was brought up by full five hundred knights of every rank, and every station of renown, from the high feudatories and greater barons of the crown — some bearing ducal coronets around their cervellieres, and all having the broad pennon, as distinguished from the banderol, attached to their long lances — down to the simple bannerets, and young esquires burning to win their spurs in the first field of glory. As the monarch advanced with the maiden to the foot of the Gothic market-cross, all eyes were fixed upon him with one single expression of enthusiastic love and admiration! All his youthful extravagances, all his mad passions, all his intrigues, were swept away, forgotten as though they had never been, in the joy of all sorts and classes of men at beholding a legitimate king of France once again riding forth under shield, boldly to do or die! He spoke not, but looked slowly round the circle with a cheerful eye; he waved his hand, and the count of Harcourt, one of the oldest and most noble barons of the realm, displayed

the sacred oriflamme of France—a banner of dark green satin, already rent in many places, and showing the effects of time which only rendered it the more venerable, charged with a royal diadem of gold, surrounded by six tongues of flame, whence it derived its title. Never displayed but on occasions the most holy and important, its very appearance on the field was hailed as an auspice and almost as a pledge of victory!—Scarcely was it now flung abroad to the free winds, before every voice throughout the crowded ranks went up to heaven in one universal soul-fraught cry—“France! France! Montjoye! St. Denis!” The trumpets flourished cheerily and high, the word was given for the march, and with a steady and increasing motion, like the flowing of a spring tide, that mighty mass rolled onward, and, ere an hour had passed, the streets of Blois were silent and deserted.

As soon as they had cleared the gates of the borough, they moved forward with as much rapidity as was consistent with good order; and three hours had not elapsed before the vanguard were in view of the lines of circumvallation, which had been drawn around Orleans by the English, under that consummate knight and leader, the regent duke of Bedford.

At this point they made a wide circuit under the very guns of the British bastions, to gain the banks of the broad Loire, but strange to say no shot was fired from the heavy ordnance, no arrow was sent from the green-frocked archery of England. Onward they filed, and now they gained the banks, when from the city rose a pealing shout—the gates were thrown open on the side of Beausse, and with trumpet-note and battle-cry, pennon, and plume, and lance, the garrison dashed out in a bold sally, charging, for the first time in many months, resolutely and boldly upon the breastworks and intrenchments of the islanders. Then were heard the mingled cries of France’s and England’s warfare—“St. George! St. George for merry

England!"—"France! France! Montjoye! St. Denis!" The gallant yeomanry of Lancashire and Yorkshire advanced slowly and in compact array—they halted. Then, as the charging chivalry drew near, they stepped forward a single pace; they raised their six-foot bows, and, without a shout or a word spoken, at the moving of their marshal's truncheon, let fly a volley of cloth-yard arrows, shooting so wholly and together, that no atmosphere was ever filled more closely with the snow-flakes of December, than was the space between the hostile forces with the fatal shafts of England. No species of missile has ever been invented half so deadly as was the Anglo-Norman archery. The musket is superior in certainty, and, above all, in the comparatively small space required for the transportation of its ammunition, but no volley of musket-shot ever swept the ground, piercing through triple steel, and hurling horse and man to earth, with one continual and incessant shower, as did that iron storm. A few—a few only—of the best and bravest reached the lines, protected by strong barriers and steel-shod palisades—but wo to the yeoman who met those desperate few! No offensive armor that could be worn by the heaviest infantry, much less the light hacquetons and open morions, which, with a buckler of a hand's breadth, formed the sole protection of the bow-men, could resist the thundering sweep of the two-handed swords, which rose and fell like ponderous engines rather than mere human weapons, or the tremendous thrust of the level lance! Boldly, however, and with stubborn hearts did they make good the fight despite the odds—hurling their iron mallets at the heads of their steel-clad antagonists, plunging their swords into the crevices of the barbed armor which covered the destriers, and here and there inflicting ghastly wounds on the riders themselves, through plate and mail, with their national weapon, the brown-hill. Anon the tramp of horses and the clank of armor an-

nounced the British chivalry, as wheeling round on either flank from the rear of the archery, their plumes streaming backward in the current of air created by the violence of their own motion, and their lances levelled to the charge, they swept irresistibly over the plain. Had they thus fallen on the rear of the sallying force, already galled almost beyond endurance by the incessant discharge of arrows with which they had been plied, not a man of all that gallant company would ever have returned within the walls of Orleans. But so it was not ordained ; with the steady generalship of an old experienced leader, the maid had profited, in the first instance, by the superstitious terror of the English outposts, who were half-defeated by their consternation before a blow was struck, and then by the diversion caused by the sally of the besieged. Slowly and cautiously she had marshalled her army upon the river bank—had embarked strong reinforcements and store of provisions in the gallèys on the broad and beautiful river—had watched their progress with sail and oar, until they had entered the water-gates, and until the joyous acclamations from within announced that Orleans was indeed relieved. Then wheeling her columns of chivalry into long lines, she advanced with lance in rest, at a smart trot in beautifully accurate array, to bring off the party which had so seasonably and so gallantly sallied forth in her behalf. At the very moment when the scanty forces of France were hemmed in, as it seemed, hopelessly between the archery and the men-at-arms of England, so promptly had she timed, and so skilfully executed her manœuvre—at the very point of time, the faint shout of the besieged was answered by a shrill clear voice—the cry of the inspired maid—“ God aid ! God aid !—France ! France and victory !” The English were in turn outflanked ; and, although Bedford with the almost instinctive skill that can only be acquired by minds naturally martial, and by those only after long

experience, brought off his chivalry unhurt, he was nevertheless compelled to abandon his prey. In sullen mood, he saw the relieved garrison draw off their shattered companies—he saw them enter the fresh files of the maiden's marshalled host, and pass off to the gates, while she, unmoved and calm amid the shouting and the din, sat bareheaded beneath her mystic banner! Not a bow was bent, not a lance levelled! The very banners of the English host, the lion banners that for ten long years had never been displayed, except to wave o'er conquered fields of glory, were furled around their staves! The spell was broken! the most potent spell on earth, while it endures, the confidence in their own valor—the certainty of victory was torn from those bold islanders; nay, more, it was already transferred to their despised antagonists: for there was not one French heart, of all the thousands gathered there, that beat not high with self-congratulating pride and valor, as the long array entered the gates of Orleans.

“Gentlemen, and knights of France—princes and paladins, and thou, sir king, have I, or have I *not* fulfilled my plighted word? I said that Orleans should be saved, and ~~we~~ are within her walls! Is she *not* saved already?” Such were the words of Joan, as she displayed her sacred banner, beside the oriflamme of France, high on the outer walls. “As I said then, so say I now; and, as I say, so shall it be for ever! The Maid of Arc shall be forgotten in the Maid of Orleans! It is so even now! The Maid of Orleans shall be forgotten in the Maid of Rheims! So shall it be right shortly! On! on! nobles and knights—behind ye is defeat and death, before ye is a bright career of honor, victory, and immortal fame! On! on! for I have said that France shall once again be free!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEMPTATION.

Pucelle.—I must not yield to any rites of love,
For my profession's sacred from above;
When I have chased all thy foes from hence,
Then will I think upon a recompense.

KING HENRY VI.

It was a night of revelry in Orleans. The contrast between the wild and joyous mirth that now rang through every court and alley of the Gothic city, and the dark sullen gloom, which for weeks before had brooded over its beleagured walls and its well-nigh famished inmates, was as perfect as it was delightful. In place of the bent brow, and compressed lips of men, nerving themselves to bear the torments of that most fell destroyer, gaunt famine—in place of the pale cheek, dim eye, and slight, attenuated form of the faint mothers, robbing themselves of their scant sustenance, to minister to the wants of their weak and wailing little ones—in place of tears and lamentations, deep groans, and deeper curses—there might now be seen on every lip a smile of heartfelt gratitude, in every eye a bright expression, on every cheek, how delicate and thin soever, the bright flush of new-springing hope—there might now be heard the jocund laugh, the loud hurrah, the pealing cadence of minstrelsey and song.

On that night, every window of the poorest and most lowly habitations, was gleaming with lights of every degree of brilliancy and price. From the coarse candle of unbleached tallow, or the lantern of oiled paper, to the gigantic torch of virgin wax, and the lamp of golden network, all was in blaze of

lustre ; banners were waving from the casement, or hung from lines traversing the narrow streets—flowers were strewed on the pavements—trumpets were sending forth their wild notes of rejoicing, far into the surrounding country, announcing to the peasantry for miles around, that Orleans was relieved, and telling to the warders of the English camp, that their reign of victory was at an end, their bows broken, and their lion hampered, when in the very act of bounding on its prostrate victim.

Wine flowed in profusion—bread was distributed to all, with no stint, save that of appetite—muttons and beeves were roasted whole in every court and square—and wretches who, perhaps, had been deprived of wholesome food, nay, of a sufficiency of *any* food, for weeks and months, now gorged themselves beside the blazing bonfires, till wearied, if not satiated with the feast, they sank down upon the rugged pavement, in the deep slumbers of insensibility.

Nor did the very watchers, as it would seem, upon the outer walls, who were placed there to guard the blessings they had won, sit on their airy pinnacles without participating in the general festivities. Lights might be seen glancing to and fro on battlement and rampart, and here and there behind some sheltering curtain, or in the angle of some salient bastion, might be caught the redder glare of fires, around which the heedless guards were carousing no less blithely than their comrades in the streets below. It required, indeed, all the attention of the provost of the watch, and captains of the guard, who, through the livelong night might be distinguished by the clashing of their armor, and by the exchange of watchwords, as they made their hourly circuits of the ramparts, to keep them to their duty ; nor were they even without fears that the ever alert and energetic Bedford might profit by the relaxation, or to speak more justly, by the utter absence of all discipline,

to make an attack, which could hardly fail of success, on the city, buried, like Troy of old, in sleep and wine.

Blithe, however, as was the merriment, and picturesque as was the scene without, nothing might vie with the pomp, the revelry, and the magnificence that were crowded into the wide halls and echoing corridors of the Hotel de Ville. The king and all his chivalry had feasted, in celebration of this their first success, with the burghers and *echevins* of Orleans, and in that feast had been concentrated all of civic luxury—all of regal magnificence. But the feast was ended—of the peacock that had so lately graced the board—decked with his starry train, as when in life with gilded claws and coronetted head—nothing was left save a despoiled and most unseemly carcass!—boars'-heads from Montrichart, heronshaws and egrets from the marshy woodlands of Hainault, had shared the same reverse of fortunes, and having a short hour before, ministered to the goodly appetites of lordly knights and their queen-like *damoiselles*, by the aid of steward and seneschal, were now rudely torn asunder among the strife and rioting of pages, and yet meaner varlets; yet, even still, there was enough in the canopied dais—in the long array of seats cushioned with rich furs and velvet—in the display of massive plate—ewers and flasks of gold, enriched with marquetry and chasings—bowls rough with the designs of the earlier schools of Italian art—mirrors of polished steel, wherein the fabled centaurs might have viewed the gigantic bulk of their double frames entire—torches of wax flaring and streaming in the sockets of huge golden standishes—flowers and rushes strewn on the marble floor—which had sent up their dewy perfumes, mingling with the savor of rich meats, and with the odorous fragrance of the wines, already celebrated, of Aix, of Sillery, and of Auxerre—now trampled into an unseemly mass of verdant confusion—and, above all, in the gay attire

and evident rank of the servitors, who yet bustled to and fro in those banquet-halls deserted — to mark the consequence of the guests, who had thus partaken of the hospitality of the merchant-lords of Orleans.

But if the banquet-chamber was mute and voiceless, not so were the yet loftier halls, which stretched their long lines of illuminated windows from end to end of that huge Gothic building. From those windows pealed the rejoicing music, mingled with the light merriment of girls, and the hearty merriment of paladins and peers. Nor was the scene within less brilliant, than the promise given by the sounds which issued into the bosom of the night. A thousand torches were gleaming along the walls, doubled and trebled by the reflectors of polished steel or silver, that were arranged behind them—banners of all times and nations, covered the vaulted roof with a bright canopy, that waved and rustled in every breath of air—in a high gallery were seated the choicest musicians of the age, with every instrument then invented, to soothe the ear or gladden the heart of man, by their mingled harmonies. Trumpet, and horn, and kettledrum, and cymbal, sounded in wild, yet beautiful unison with the softer symphonies of harp and lute, and the melodious warblings of the birdlike fife ; and ever and anon the richer and more perfect note, of that most exquisite of vocal instruments, the human voice, gushed forth in choral strains, now unaccompanied by aught of string or wind, now blended, but still distinct, in the deep diapason of that noble band. But who shall describe the crowd that swayed to and fro over the tessellated pavement below, in obedience to the minstrelsey and music, even as the light waves of a summer sea heave at the bidding of the light air, that crisps, but may not curl or whiten their sparkling crests. It was not merely in the deep splendor, the harmonious coloring, the picturesque forms of the antiquated costume, it was not merely in the

plumes of heron or ostrich—the snowy ermine, the three-piled mantles of Genoa velvet—not in the hose of sandal twined with threads of silver—not in the buskins of satin, or the spurs of gold—not in the bright gems, the medals, and the fanfarinas—not in the robes of vair and caps of maintenance, that graced the stately warriors of the court. Nor yet was it in the flowing trains, the graceful ruffs, the pearls wreathed in the pleached and plaited hair, the diamond stomachers, and chains of goldsmiths' work—it was not in these, that centred the attraction of the glorious concourse—though with these, not the costliest pageantry of modern times, could for a moment's space compare. Nor was it even more striking than these—the beauty, the mere personal beauty of the wearers—the mingled strength and grace of the knights, whose places were filled no less decorously in the bower of ladies, than in the strife of men—the sylph-like forms, the wavy and voluptuous motions, the eyes brilliant or laughing, tender or *agacante*, of those highborn damoiselles. No, it was not in any, nor in all of these. But in the aristocratic bearing, the high, full-blooded look, that might be traced in the features and the forms, alike of either sex; the small and well-set heads; the tall and slight, though exquisitely rounded limbs; the delicate hands—practised, however, they might be, in wielding the huge espaldron, or yet more weighty battle-axe; the blue veins rising in bold and pencilled relief, from brow and neck; the expanded nostrils; and, above all, the perfect grace of every movement, whether in voluptuous repose, or in the mazes of the wheeling dance. It was in these rare attributes, that consisted the real splendor of that assemblage—it was by these—the distinctive marks of Norman blood—that the most casual observer might have styled each individual there, even at a moment's notice, as the descendant of some immemorial line. All the magnificence might have been lavished upon a troop

of mendicants—but lavished to no purpose. No art, no splendor, no disguise, could have metamorphosed those into the most transitory likeness to nobility—more than the mean weeds and tattered garments could have banished from these, their inborn air of aristocracy.

Hundreds there were of the most brave, of the most beautiful—Agnes de Sorel, the acknowledged mistress of the king, with her broad laughing eyes of blue, and her profusion of sunny ringlets shadowing a neck of alabaster. Isabel de Castelnau, her noble form and majestic expression of features, well-suited to the antique head-dress, and the purple robe, with a delicate merlin, perched unhooded on her wrist, gazing with his wild, bright eyes into the equally brilliant mirrors of his lady's soul, without manifesting the slightest wish to flutter, or to fly. Helene de Marigny, with her slender, girl-like proportions, and that air of timid bashfulness, that so belied her character; Helene de Marigny, who, in her brother's absence, roused at the dead of night by the clash of armor and the trumpet-note, had seen the English foemen scaling the windows of her virgin-bower; had seen, and with no woman-terror, grasped to the mortal sword, and wielded it triumphantly, till succor completed that defence, which she—a fairy-looking maid of seventeen—had protracted so manfully and well. Diane de Bourcicaut, sister to the bravest and the best of Charles's young warriors. Louise de Querouaille, fairer and far more chaste than her more famous namesake of after-ages—and last, not least, Mademoiselle, the lovely sister of the king. All these were there, and others, unnumbered and beautiful as the stars in a summer heaven, toying, in mere dalliance, or yielding, perchance, to deeper and more real feelings, as they moved in the giddy dance, or reclined on the canopied settees beside those gallant lovers, who might to-morrow lie, all maimed and bleeding, on the red battle-field. But among

all these, the flower of France's female aristocracy — among all these, there was one pre-eminent — pre-eminent not only in her actual beauty, but in that woman grace, that free, yet gentle demeanor, that airiness of motion, and exquisite propriety of manner, which are so essentially the offspring of noble birth, and of unconscious practice, if not of conventual rules. That one — the fairest and the noblest — insomuch as the eye might judge by any outward token — that *one*, was the peasant-maiden! Admired almost to adoration by the chivalrous spirits of the day, and tested with the severest and most bitter criticism of those of her lovely rivals, who had seen, in too many instances, the knights who had been sworn their servants, desert from their allegiance, humbly and hopelessly to throw their services, their homage, and their love, at the feet of the inspired shepherdess. All this had she gone through, triumphantly; in the ordeal of the banquet and the ball, she had proved her noble qualities, no less completely than amid the din of battle. The test of private and familiar intercourse she had endured and conquered — the test of that society wherein enthusiasm is ridiculous, and nothing is deemed becoming of a lady, save the conventional bearing of the circle, whether it be of hoyden mirth, or of the habitual *posé*, concealing the deepest feelings, and perchance, the wildest profligacy, beneath the semblance of unmoved composure, and self-restraint.

At the banquet, she had feasted beneath the canopy of state, at the right of the victorious monarch — through her means victorious — she had been served, on the knee, by knights and nobles — she had sipped from jewelled goblets the richest vintages of France — she had seen and heard a thousand things, which must have been equally new and wondrous to the village-girl of Domremy; and this, too, with the consciousness that hundreds of bright female eyes were reading her every

look, with envious eagerness, to see some breach of etiquette, some symptom of embarrassment, some *gaucherie*, which—however pardonable in itself, and however naturally to be expected in her, who had heretofore scarce heard of, much less mingled on the footing of equality, with princesses and kings—might at least have justified them in pronouncing her a creature beneath the notice, much more the devotion of the free and noble. All this had she done, yet by no sign, no motion however trivial, no expression of eye or feature, had she betrayed the slightest confusion, the least consciousness of being otherwise waited on, or differently respected, than from her earliest childhood.

The feast was ended, and, each lady leaning on the shoulder of her chevalier, the gay assembly filed, to the chiming melody of instruments, through the long corridors to the halls already cleared for the high dance, and as they passed along, it was the arm of Charles that led—in preference to wife or maiden of ancestral dignity—the Maid of Arc.

Mantles and plumed-hats and jewelled estocs were thrown by, spurs were drawn from satin buskins, trains were looped up, or quite removed by page and servitor—the halls were cleared—the minstrels breathed into their instruments the fullest soul of their vocation. Wherefore that pause—it was the king's to lead the festive measure—the king's, who was even now engrossed to utter unconsciousness of all that was around him, by the strange beauty, the rich enthusiasm, and above all, the *naïve* and natural simplicity of his companion.

“Pray God, that she may dance,” whispered Diane the Bourcicaut, to the fair Agnes; “pray God that she may dance—none of your *canaille* may attempt the *pavon* and fail to be ridiculous. Is it not so, my Agnes?”

With a faint smile she who was addressed looked up, but it was beyond the powers of a spirit, highly strung and noble—

even as was hers—to reply in the tones of polished raillery, or to affect the air of unconcern, that would have best befitted the occasion. She turned her beautiful blue eyes toward her faithless lover, and though she spoke not to complain, or even to regret, a large tear hung for a moment on the long dark lashes, and slid slowly down that cheek, that lately might have vied with all that is most sweet and warm in the created universe, now cold and colorless as the sepulchral marble. Hers was not a heart to wish for the failure of a rival in aught trivial, or of mere court-fashion. “No, no!” she murmured to herself, almost unconsciously. “If in all else she be superior to poor Agnes—superior even to the winning from her of that false heart she deemed assuredly her own, then may she conquer in all else—and oh, may HE be happy!”

None heard the words—none heeded, or perchance understood the sorrows of the heart-wronged maiden; but neither were the light wishes expressed by Diane, nor the similar hopes indulged if unexpressed by many a jealous fair one, to be gratified. The maiden was too high-minded for so frivolous a practice as the soulless dance, or, perchance, too circumspect to attempt aught wherein she was so like to fail. It was in vain that the king, the young and glorious monarch, pleaded with an enthusiastic ardor, somewhat disproportioned to the magnitude of the boon, for her fair hand, if it were but for a single revel. The maiden was inflexible, yet Charles departed not from her elbow. The music sounded clearly and high, driving the blood in faster and more tumultuous currents through many a bounding form—the dance went on—couple after couple glancing or gliding, part in slow voluptuous movements, part in the giddy whirl of the swift maze. A few short moments passed, and the maiden and the monarch were alike forgotten.

On a solitary couch, deep set in the embrasure of a huge

oriel window that overlooked the ramparts though at a long distance, the maiden was reclining. Her head and exquisitely-moulded bust supported on a pile of damask cushions, and the symmetrical lines of her person and her limbs scarcely perceptible by the wavy motions of her velvet robe; but her countenance was buried in her hand, and the beautiful bust was throbbing, and panting, as though it were about to burst with the fierceness of its own emotions. With an insidious whisper, a flushed cheek, and a quickened pulse, Charles knelt beside her. One of her fairy hands he had mastered, spite of some feminine resistance, and held it to his bosom—his words were inaudible, but the purport might be easily conjectured, from the effect they produced on her who listened in such manifest abandonment of feeling.

She raised her speaking features—there was a softness, an expression of deep feeling, almost of yielding in her eye, but the firmness of the chiseled mouth denied the weakness.

“Oh, sire,” she said, in notes of the most harmonious softness, in which there might be traced a shadow of reproach—“Oh, sire, and is it thus you would reward your savior? I am a woman—a frail woman—though for a special end, and by a mighty God inspired—but save my own weak judgment, my own erring—yet thanks be to the Eternal—not, oh, not abandoned impulses, I have no inspiration to guide me in the narrow path of duty. And is it generous, or great, or kingly? is it worthy the last heir of a long line of mighty ones, to pit his strength against a woman’s weakness?—his eloquence, fervid and impassioned as it is, against her fond credulity?—his rank and beauty against the ignorance, the admiring ignorance of her peasant-heart. For *thee* I have left home, and friends; and country—for to me my native valley was my country—for *thee* I have violated the strict laws of womanhood, incurring the reproach of over-boldness and unmaidenly

demeanor in donning male attire and backing the fierce war-horse. All this have I done for *thee*; oh, strive not, thou, to rob *me* of my sole remaining heritage, my maiden virtue—my unblemished honor!”

“Oh, say not so! most beautiful and sweetest,” returned the king; “knowest thou not that kings who may not wive them, save for policy, may give their fondest love, may give their hand and homage *par amours*, and do naught of dishonor to the proudest.”

“Nay! then,” she cried, springing to her feet, with the air of some young Pythoness full of the oracular presence—“Nay, then, I will be heard—selfish and base!—ay, base and selfish art thou! Dost think that I, I, the inspired of Heaven, could bend to infamy? Dost dare to think that I, if I could love a thing so exquisitely false as thou art, that I would not tear out the guilty passion from my heart, though it should rend the heart-strings? But so it is not—so shall it never be! In that lone valley I deserted one, who would have died for me—ay, *died*! not in your poor court-phrase, not to dishonor, not to damn with the blight of his own infamy the creature he pretended to adore! but to have called me his, *his* in the face of Heaven. Him did I leave, not that I felt not the blow which severed us—not that I was senseless to his honest love—not that I was ingrate or cold; but that I had a duty, a duty paramount, summoning me, trumpet-tongued, to rescue *thee*!—thou who wouldst now destroy me, and for ever! Now, know me! Know me, and tremble! First know, that not for ten—for ten—not for ten thousand crowned THINGS like thee, would Joan of Orleans barter the true peasant-love of that forsaken one! Know further, that even now while thou art striving to dishonor thy defender—even now the English Lion is ramping at your gates—even now fierce Bedford is beneath your ramparts. Pray to your God, if you believe in his exist-

ence—pray to your God that he give you not up for ever, to your own most guilty wishes—give not your country up to the unrelenting islander!”

As she spoke, the long, shrill blast of a trumpet swept wailingly over the festive city, and a remote din of arms succeeded it, with the mingled cries of France’s and of England’s warfare. In mute astonishment Charles gazed to the distant ramparts, on which a deadly strife was even then in progress, while the bright banners and glancing casques of the besieger flashed to the moonbeams in still increasing numbers, as ladder after ladder sent up its load to overpower the slumbering wardens, and win the city thus relieved in vain. Thence, slowly and with a faltering mien, he turned to the dilating form and speaking eye of the prophetic maid—he clasped his hands, overpowered with superstitious awe—

“Save me,” he cried, “thou holy one; oh, save my country!”

“Swear, then,” she answered; “swear, then, by the Eternal Lord who sent me to thy succor; swear that never again thou wilt form in thy heart of hearts the base and blackening thought thou didst express but now!—Swear this and I will save thee!”

“I swear—I swear by the”—

“St. Denis, ho!” cried Joan, in notes that pierced the ears of the revellers like a naked sword—“Montjoye! St. Denis!—and to arms!—The English ho! the English! Joan! Joan for France, and vengeance!”

The well-known warcry was repeated from a hundred lips. The maiden snatched the banner, and the brand—helmless and in her woman robes she rushed into the conflict, followed by thousands in their festive garb, with torch, and spear, and banner! Short was the strife, and desperate. Bedford had hoped to win a sleeping woman—he found a waking lion. After a furious, but a hopeless encounter, he drew off his foiled and thwarted bands, and Orleans was again preserved!

CHAPTER VII.

THE VICTORY.

Talbot.—Hark, countrymen! either renew the fight,
Or tear the lions out of England's coat;
Renounce your soil, give sheep in lion's stead:
Sheep run not half so timorous from the wolf,
Or horse or oxen from the leopard,
As you fly from your oft-subdued slaves.

KING HENRY VI.

A WEEK had passed since the relief of Orlcans ;—a week of stern repose, of inaction, that was but preparatory to most fierce activity. A week, like the brief, breathless pause between the mustering of the storm-cloud and the first crash of Heaven's artillery. Within the walls of the relieved city—unexpectedly relieved from a state of the most abject despair—the aspect of affairs widely changed! Instead of the pale cheek, the whispered doubt or open lamentation, the cringing step, and the frame already bowed to the earth with apprehension, might be seen the bold and fiery glance, the manly front of confidence restored, the firm and martial stride! Without—there was a change, if possible, more clearly visible; a change from earth-defying valor to superstitious dread, and coward indecision. It was in vain that Bedford, Salisbury, and Talbot, those thunderbolts of war, in war's most stirring days, did all that men could do, to dispel the craven fear, to relume the drooping valor of the self-same soldiery, before a score of whom, a short week past, hundreds of steel-clad Frenchmen would have fled, without one good blow stricken, or one charger spurred to meet the onset. Nay, more than

all, it was in vain that one transient gleam of fortune smiled on their arms, that one hour of victory chequered the now wonted tale of their disasters. That very smile of fortune, that very glimpse of victory went farther to confirm the gloomy doubts which were rising up on every side to mask the sunset of their declining hopes, than the relief of Orleans had already gone, or than would ten fair defeats with marshalled front and fruitless fighting. They had repelled, and it was true—nobly repelled, and with decisive energy, a fierce attack upon one of the bastions, erected by the far-sighted regent to protect the lines of his blockade;—they had driven the hot-headed lords of France before them, as had been their wont in days of old—had chased them to the very sally-ports, from which they had so lately issued, “defying earth and confident of Heaven”—Nay, so complete had been their success, that for a moment they believed the city theirs—but the MAIDEN was not there! Her sacred banner fluttered not in the retreat—nor had her battle-cry, “God aid—God aid, for France and vengeance!”—been heard in the advance! But as they reached the city-gates, pursuers and pursued, in wild confusion, like the clear tones of a trumpet, they pealed upon the air—reanimating the faint hearts and failing hands of France’s routed sons, and striking with the cold chill of dismay to the hearts of England’s bravest—the well-remembered cadences of her war-shout! Springing from the couch to which she had retired during the heat and weariness of noon, she had buckled on her armor, vaulted on her charger, and, with a dozen knights and squires chance collected for the rescue, had galloped forth, in time to save the rash assailants from the fate which their temerity had well deserved, and once again to drive the English lion from before the walls of Orleans!

It was then evident—undoubted as the sun at his meridian—that against the maiden’s banner there could be no victory;

remove that magic obstacle, and with its wonted brightness blazed forth the British valor; uplift it, and the hearts were shaken, the arms paralyzed, the confidence abolished, which, more than either heart or hand, had well-nigh justified the title of the English monarchs to the subjugated crown of France. Still was there naught of craven shrinking from the contest, no thought of flight, or even of abandoning their conquests. No! not in the meanest sutler of the camp! That stubborn hardihood, that dogged insensibility to defeat, that passive endurance of extremities after hope itself is dead, which has ever been the characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, from the fated day of Hastings to red Waterloo, was *there* displayed in all its vigor. The privates, whether men-at-arms or archery, held to their posts in cool defiance, and mustered around their banners, if not with their accustomed alacrity, at least with readiness and prompt submission! Nor would one of the sturdy knaves have shrunk from or shunned the contest, with the best paladin in the court of Charles—but striving to outrance against the banner, in the teeth of which he deemed his valor fruitless, and victory impossible, he would have fallen unyielding, with his wounds in front, and his heart undismayed!

Such was the state of things in either host, when a general assault of the English lines, at every accessible point, was resolved on by the maiden and her council. The day was fixed for the attack, at nearly a week's distance, nor was aught of concealment or surprise so much as meditated! On the contrary, defiances were interchanged between the leaders of the hostile armies, and more cartels than one were given and accepted for mortal combat, at the head of their several divisions, and at places clearly specified! The very sentinels at the extreme outposts, between whom but a few yards of unobstructed turf, or perhaps some puny brooklet, intervened,

exulted in the prospect of a meeting under shield, face to face!

The expected morning had at length arrived, but the sun rose not in his accustomed brightness—the sky was black and overcast, a dense mist rose, like a body of packed smoke, from the low-lands, above which the occasional elevations of the country, crowned with the castellated dwellings of the nobility, or with the Gothic steeple of some village-church, loomed like distant islands, while it would have required no wild stretch of fancy to discover in the bastions of the invaders, decked with their broad banners and their woods of lances, a resemblance to a fleet becalmed, or idly waiting a renewal of the breeze.

The hour was yet early, when mass was finished in the high cathedral; the sacred host had been displayed to the reverential soldiers, as they filed onward, troop after troop, bending their mail-clad knees, and veiling their victorious standards, as they passed the ministering priest, and received his patriotic benediction, accompanied by showers of holy water, and followed by the pealing anthems of a full and noble choir. Meekly and humbly had they knelt before the shrine—the young monarch and his lovely champion!—All armed, save that their casques were held without by page and squire, had they partaken of the eucharist; draining, with lips that soon should shout the unrelenting war-cry, or perchance quiver in the pangs of violent and sudden dissolution, the typical blood of the Redeemer; and receiving, with the hands that soon must reek with human gore and wield the mortal weapon, the consecrated pledge of their salvation.

The rites had been concluded, the army was already marshalled on the plain under the guidance of its subalterns!—and now, with their attendants—banner-men and esquires of the body on gallant steeds—varlets and couteliers on foot,

but trained to run beside the charger of the lord with their huge knives, misnamed of mercy, and heavy pole-axes—the leaders galloped from the rear to their respective stations.

Slowly the mist had been dispersing beneath the influence of the sun, and of a light air from the eastward, which seemed to increase with the increasing redness of the east, although the vapors still clung heavily to the level plain. The monarch and the maiden had reached the centre of their lines—Alençon's banner might be seen on the extreme right, though its quartered bearings were invisible from the distance and the darkness; Vendôme and Bourcicaüt had announced their presence on the left by bugle-note and banner-cry; but it was around the person of the king, and of his bright associate in arms, that were mustered the pride and flower of France's chivalry! Gancourt, and La Fayette, Graville, Xaintrailles, De La Hire, and the dark Dunois, each with his chosen band of lances, each with his bannerol displayed, a knight of high renown, were gathered there, amidst a sea of waving plumes and sparkling armor.

"The time hath come, my liege," cried Joan—"the time hath come, when you shall see your foemen scattered before your lances like chaff before the wind of Heaven! And lo! a signal shall be given even now, and in that signal shalt thou conquer! When the first blast of our trumpets shall be heard abroad—when the first roar of our ordnance shall awake the slumbering echoes, then shall this cloudy tabernacle be rent in twain. Then shall the bright day-star shine down in unobstructed glory, to witness, and to aid our daring!—To your posts, nobles and knights, to your posts!—and, when the signal shall be given from on high, let each one couch his spear, and spur his steed, For France—for France and glory!"

"Away, Xaintrailles, away to these knave cannoneers, and let them lay their ordnance fairly, and load it heavily!" cried

Dunois; "and, when they hear a royal trumpet, let them shoot on while fire and linstock hold!"

The clash of hoofs was heard, and ere a moment elapsed the youthful warrior and train were lost in the near mist-wreaths.

There was a pause of deep, deep silence! Joan sat upon her motionless and well-trained charger, gazing aloft, and toward the east, with a calm, searching eye; not the wild glance of doubt or anxiety, but the steady gaze of confident and conscious faith, awaiting the confirmation of its promise. With the speed of light had the prophecy been rumored through the host, and—though every vizor was lowered, every buckler braced, and every lance lowered in preparation for the instant charge—though the advance of the enemy might be already noted, in the heavy tramp of the approaching squadrons, and in the occasional clang of armor—still every eye was directed heavenward, in keen anxiety for the proof of the prophet-maiden's inspiration.

Was it indeed inspiration—was it the divine gift of foresight bestowed, on one most ignorant of the world's wisdom, for high and holy purposes? Or was it that intimate acquaintance with the atmospheric phenomena, so often possessed by those whose duty it is to tend their flocks on the upland pasture or in the mountain-valley, operating now on her enthusiastic and zealous temperament, that caused the peasant-maiden to predict occurrences, which were in truth about to be fulfilled; thus deceiving alike herself and those who followed her?

The sounds of the approaching foemen rose clearly and more clearly on the ear; the very words of the leaders might be heard in the deep hush of expectation, and now, through the intervening mist, might be seen, dimly and ghost-like, the long array of the invaders. The maiden cast a quick glance to the king, and, catching his assent from the motion of his closed helmet, flung her hand aloft—

“Now trumpets!” she cried — “sound! sound for France! Montjoye! St. Denis!”

A single clear blast arose, blown from the silver-trumpet of a pursuivant who stood beside her stirrup — shrilly was it protracted, without flourish or variation, till caught up, and repeated from a thousand brazen instruments. While their screaming cadences were yet deafening every ear, and thrilling every heart, a sharp crash, a deep, hoarse roar, burst forth on the extensive right. Crash after crash, roar after roar, the stunning voice of the newly-invented ordnance rolled along the front. For a moment's space the darkness was increased — the smoke from the artillery rolled thickly back upon the lines — there was a stir in the atmosphere, a quick, shivering motion — a cold breath — the banners fluttered wildly, the feathers tossed, and fell again, and then streamed out at length, and all in one direction. A fresh breeze swept down from the eastward, and, like a huge curtain raised by unseen machinery, the whole volume of mingled smoke and mist surged upward, was swept violently away, and, in less time than the narration occupies, was curling in scattered vapors over the far horizon. As the fog lifted, the glorious sun burst forth, not gradually or with increasing splendor, but in one rich, sudden flood of glory. The animated scene was kindled as if by magical illumination; from flank to flank, each host was visible — a line of polished steel, with its bright lance-heads twinkling aloft like stars, and its emblazoned banners of a thousand mingled hues, floating and nestling on the breath of morning.

Louder than the trumpet's clamor, louder than the thunders of the ordnance — as the maiden's signal was given, as she had said it, from on high — pealed the exulting shout of those assembled myriads. A thousand spurs were dashed into the horses' flanks, a thousand lances levelled, and a thousand different war-cries shouted aloud, as the French chivalry rushed to

the onset. Their infantry had been drawn up in solid columns of reserve, while the archery and yeomen of the English force were posted within the lines, which were fortified by a long trench and palisade, strengthened at intervals by half-moons of stone, and masked by scattered shrubs and coppice. The charge was, therefore, horse to horse, and knight to knight; but fiercely as the main bodies rushed to the encounter, they were yet outstripped by a score of leaders, on either side, who galloped forth to redeem their plighted words, and win them glory before men, and love of ladies.

The king and Dunois were the foremost, but ere they had met their antagonists, a third rider was abreast of these. The azure panoply and scarf, the chestnut charger, the slender form, and more than manly grace, announced the MAIDEN. Nor were the English champions slower in the shock—Talbot spurred out, and Salisbury, and young De Vere. D'Alençon was opposed by Somerset, and the wise regent couched his lance against the breast of Dunois. On they came, with the rush of the whirlwind—a long series of single combats. The bay destrier of D'Alençon went down before the spear of Somerset—but De Vere's life-blood streamed on the unsplintered lance of Bourcicaut. The king had met the noble Salisbury in stout equality—their lances splintered to the grasp, their steeds recoiling on their haunches, told the fury of the shock. The maid had couched her untried weapon against no less a warrior than the gallant Talbot, as she charged side by side with the bold bastard. But, had the lance of that unrivalled warrior met with no more resistance than the virgin's feeble thrust, that day had ended her career. Fair and knightly did she bear her weapon against his triple-shield, but his lance-point, levelled at her crest, encountered the bars of her elastic vizor; it caught firm hold, and spurring his steed more fiercely on, he had well nigh borne her from the selle. But

there was one who marked her peril ; Dunois, even in the instant of the shock, beheld her overmatched, and well nigh conquered. With a devotedness of valor well worthy of the best cavalier of France, he turned his lance, from his own antagonist, against the helm of Talbot, meeting the overpowering charge of Bedford, with undaunted, although unresisting firmness. It was over in an instant : Talbot, although unharmed by the slight charge of Joan, was hurled to earth, as by a thunderbolt, on meeting the unlooked-for weapon of Dunois, in the same instant that his conqueror went down before the unhindered shock of Bedford.

The dark tresses of the maiden streamed upon the air, her ecstatic eye, her flushed brow, and speaking lineaments, were exposed to the brunt of battle ; for the lacings of her casque had broken, and she had escaped being unhorsed, only by the scarce inferior peril of being thus violently unhelmed. Still she was unshaken in her seat, and, as she was borne forward by her mettled steed, swinging her bright *espaldron* above her head, she looked rather an avenging angel, than a mortal warrior. In the rush, Bedford had been carried over his fallen antagonist, ere he could check his charger ; and, as he turned to renew the combat, the maiden wheeled round likewise to rescue her preserver.

“ God aid ! ” she cried — “ God aid ! — The virgin to the rescue ! ” and as his eyes were directed downward to the unhorsed Dunois, who had already gained his feet and grasped his massive axe, she smote him on the casque with the full sweep of her two-handed blade. Sparks of fire flashed from the concussion, and the stout regent reeled in his saddle. Another second, and the axe of Dunois fell on the chamfront of steel that protected his charger’s brow, and, dashing it to atoms, sunk deeply into the brain of the animal. Down went Bedford, and over him stood his conqueror, with his poniard already

pointed to the barred vizor, and his deep voice summoning him to surrender. But the summons was premature, a score of English knights rushed to the rescue, while the king, with La Fayette, Xaintrilles, and De La Hire, bore down to the support of his companions. Long would it be, and tedious, to recount the deeds of arms that were performed, the brilliant valor that was there displayed. The *melée* was fought out by the best knights of France and England, and fought with equal vigor ; but fate was, on that day, adverse to the bold invaders. At this point in their line, and at this point only, did they hold the battle in suspense ; in every other part of the field they were already foiled, and in retreat ; and now, as the chivalry of Charles, by the defeat of their immediate opponents, was enabled to concentrate their forces, Bedford, and Salisbury, and Talbot, whose backs no Frenchman had ever seen before, were fain to extricate themselves, as best they might, and retreat to their entrenchments. Nor was this last effort successful, till they had left a fearful number of their best and bravest outstretched, never again to rise upon the bloody plain. Foot by foot, they retreated, bearing up dauntlessly against their overwhelming foes, and giving the foremost of their adversaries deep cause to rue their rashness. Bourcicaut fell, cloven to the teeth by Salisbury—the right-arm of La Fayette was shattered by the mace of Somerset—the blood was gushing in a dozen places from the sable armor of Dunois, and the golden panoply of Charles was broken, and besmeared with dust and gore.

Still not a man of those bold barons, but must have fallen, or yielded them to the courtesy of their antagonists, had not the tide of battle swept them, pursuers and pursued alike, to the vicinity of the British line. Then rose once more the jovial island shout—"St. George ! St. George for merry England !" A heavy and incessant shower of cloth-yard shafts

came sailing over the heads of the retreating party, and fell with accurately-measured aim, and terrible effect, into the crowded ranks of the pursuers. Then came the roar of ordnance; in a dozen spots the ponderous balls of stone or metal ploughed their paths of devastation through the French columns; while under cover of their archery, the discomfited islanders filed slowly into their entrenchments—Charles drawing off his troops, in order to reform his array, and give his men brief space for refreshment and repose, ere he should make his final effort on the position of the half-conquered Bedford.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ASSAULT.

“There the breach lies for passage, the ladder to scale;
And your hands on your sabres, and how should ye fail?
He who first downs with the red-cross may crave
His heart’s dearest wish; let him ask it, and have!”
Thus uttered Coumourgî the dauntless vizier;
The reply was the brandish of sabre and spear,
And the shout of fierce thousands in joyous ire:—
Silence—hark to the signal—fire.”

SIEGE OF CORINTH.

THE din of battle ended suddenly as it had commenced; the weary and discomfited forces of the islanders were now concealed behind their palisades, save here and there a solitary warder, pacing to and fro on the low bastions, his steel-cap and spear-point flashing back the rays of the noontide sun. The long array of France, which had fallen orderly and slowly back without the flight of arrow or the range of ordnance,

might be seen midway between the town and the works of the besiegers. Horses were picqueted, and outposts stationed along their front ; while, their weapons stacked, their helmets unlaced, and their bodies cast leisurely on the ground, the troops enjoyed to the utmost their brief interval of truce. Camp fires had been lighted, and their smoke curled peacefully in fifty places toward the bright sky above them ; sutlers had come out from the town, beeves had been slaughtered, wine-casks broached, and without a sign of revelry, or wild debauch, the army feasted after their noonday strife.

At a short distance in advance of the line occupied by the main body of the forces, there stood a magnificent elm-tree, the only one in sight, which had risen in height sufficient to protect those beneath its shadow from the glare of a meridian sun. Immediately from under its roots a pure cold spring welled forth into a basin of stone artificially, though roughly, hewn to receive its waters ; and trickling thence in a small but limpid streamlet wound its way toward the distant river. Beneath this tree, and around the basin of the spring, a group of warriors was collected whom the slightest glance might have discovered to be of no ordinary rank ; their splendid arms, their gallant steeds, let forth and backward by squires of gentle birth and gay attire, and their emblazoned banners pitched into the ground beside their place of rest, designated at once the leaders of the host.

A wide sheet of crimson damask had been spread out upon the turf ; bottians of leather or flasks of metal were plunged into the vivid waters to cool their rich contents ; goblets of gold, and dishes already ransacked, were mingled in strange confusion with sculptured helmets, jewelled poniards, and the hilts of many a two-handed blade cast on the sod in readiness to the grasp of its bold owner.

The visage of the king was flushed, and his eye sparkled

with the intoxication, not of the grape, but of his recent victory. Nor did the brow of Dunois wear its wonted gravity; gay words and boasts, rendered less offensive by their prowess of the morning, passed among the younger knights; but on the lips of Joan there was no smile, and in her eye no flash; steadfastly gazing on the heavens, she sat with a deep shade of melancholy on her chiselled lineaments, resembling rather some sad captive waiting the hour of her doom, than a prophetess whose words had been accomplished—a warrior whose first field had been a triumph.

“Why lies so deep a shadow on the brow of our fair champion?” cried the youthful monarch. “In such an hour as this sadness is ominous, and open melancholy—treason! Cheer thee, bright being—the king drinks to his preserver!” and, suiting the action to the word, he filled a goblet with the mantling wine of Auvergnat, and tendered it to the silent maiden. “One more carouse,” he said, “and then to horse, to horse, and we will win the trenches of those dog-islanders ere the sun sinks on the lea!”

“And you are then determined,” she replied in tones of sorrowful, not angry, import;—“and you are then determined to risk all—honor, life, victory, your country’s hope, your people’s happiness, by this mad haste, this rash and obstinate impiety! I tell you now, as heretofore I told you, be patient and victorious—be rash, and infamy shall fall on you; the infamy of flight, and terror, and defeat!”

“I am determined!” was the cool and somewhat haughty answer; “I am determined to force these ramparts ere I sleep this night; or under them to sleep that sleep which knows no earthly waking!”

“And thou shalt force those ramparts—wilt thou but tarry. Tarry till the shadows of this elm-tree fall far eastward; till the sun hath stooped within a hand’s breadth of the horizon;

tarry till then, and thou shalt conquer—advance now, and, 'tis I that say it—I, Joan of Orleans—advance now, and thou shalt rue the hour !”

“Nay, maiden,” replied Dunois, who hitherto had sat a silent, though not interested, listener, “for once must I oppose thee ; to tarry would be but to give space to the troops of Bedford to shake off their superstitions—to ours to lose their confidence of glory. To tarry is defeat—to advance, victory !—victory as surely as steel blade and silver hilt may hold together !”

“I say to thee, Dunois,” she answered, “the ways of the Most High are not the ways of man ! He who hath raised a peasant-girl to be a royal leader, can turn defeat to victory, and triumph to most foul disaster. Neither if ye advance, as well I know ye will, shall the steel blade and silver hilt hold, as their wont, together ! Seeing, thou shalt believe, and suffering, tremble !”

“Enough !” shouted the impatient king ; “enough of this—sound trumpets, and advance !”

No further words were uttered, nor had one spoken could the import of his speech have been discovered, among the clanging of the trumpets, the wild shouts of the troopers hurrying to their ranks, the tramp of the cavalry, and the breathless din of the advance.

The maiden turned her dark eyes plaintively upward ; she stretched her arms slowly apart, and with a gaze of mute appeal prayed silently. Her brief orisons at an end, she too buckled her weapon to her side, laced her plumed helmet, and haughtily rejecting the proffered aid of Charles, vaulted, without the use of rein or stirrup, into her steel-bound demipique.

The host was already in motion—marching in four solid columns against the besiegers' lines ; the knights and men-at-arms dismounted from their destriers, crowding the front, on

foot, with mace, and battle-axe, and espaldron, instead of lance and pennon; their hoods of mail drawn closely over their crested helmets, their small triangular bucklers flung aside, and each protected from the missiles of the British by his huge pavesse of polished steel without device or bearing, six feet in height, and three in breadth, borne by his squire before him. Behind this powerful mass came on the pioneers, with axe and mattock, fagots and piles, to undermine the walls, ladders to scale their summits, and mantelets of plank covered with newly-severed hides, huge machines, beneath the protection of which to labor at the walls in safety. In the rear the light-armed followed: archers, and crossbowmen, and javelin-eers, and slingers. It was, indeed, a host to strike dismay into the hearts of the defenders, as it advanced steadily and silently, with the deep silence of resolve, right onward to the bastion.

At the head of the right-hand column rode the monarch, that to his left commanded by Dunois—Gaucourt and De La Hire leading the others; and the maiden, who had refused to serve save as a private lance, riding in sullen apathy beside the bridle-hand of the bold bastard. At a short mile's distance the columns halted, while Dunois and the leaders galloped forward, confident in their coats of plate, to reconnoitre the position of the heavy ordnance, the effects of which they had too terribly experienced to endure without an effort at avoidance a second discharge, which to troops in solid column must have carried certain destruction. Boldly they performed their duty, dashing up to within twenty paces of the outworks, under a storm of bolts and shafts, that rattled against their armor as closely, but as harmlessly, as hail-stones on a castle-wall. Two batteries were at once discovered, and as the rude artillery of that day, placed, when about to be discharged, on motionless beds of timber, and dragged, when on the march, by

teams of oxen, could not be made to traverse or command any other points than those on which it had been previously laid, there was but little fear of so arranging the advance as to avoid their fatal fire. Still as he returned the last from his reconnoissance, Dunois was ill at ease. "There should be yet another," he muttered; "and to encounter it were certain ruin. A murrain on that wily regent; now hath he masked it cunningly!"

But there was no space for further parley; with the bray of the trumpets, and the deep clang of the kettle-drum, the signal for the charge was given; the soldiery of France deployed from column into line, and with a quickened step and levelled weapons rushed forward to the assault. At the distance of some fifty paces from the works of the besiegers, the ground was rugged and broken, the channel of a dry rivulet running the whole length of their front, its banks scattered with blocks of stone, and thickly planted with thorny shrubs. The troops, which had been formed obliquely to avoid the fire of the artillery, had advanced into this difficult pass before they were well aware of its existence, and before meeting with any opposition from the enemy. The most broken ground had been selected by Dunois as the point of attack, hoping by that means to escape the range not only of the two batteries, which, having been discovered, he had already guarded against, but that of a third which had been so cunningly masked, as to defy the closest observation. Well, however, as this had been devised, it so fell out that the column of the king, which, partly through the obstinacy of the royal chief, and partly from the ill advice of leaders jealous of the gallant bastard, had failed to deploy with the remainder of the host, advanced blindly in its crowded ranks upon the very muzzles of the concealed ordnance. Hitherto not a symptom of resistance had appeared; not a man had been seen upon the English ramparts; not a

banner was displayed, not a trumpet blown. But at this instant—when the line had been compelled to halt, within half bow-shot of the bastions, while the pioneers, with axe and mattock, were clearing the ground in their front—at this instant the wailing note of a single bugle rang from within the works. Ere the signal had well reached the assailants, the rampart was thronged from end to end with thousands of the green-frocked archery of England; again the bugle was wind-ed, and at that brief distance the cloth-yard shafts fell in one continuous volley, darkening the air with their numbers, and almost drowning the shouts of the battle with their incessant whizzing. Close, however, as they fell and bodily, each arrow there was aimed at its peculiar mark; and each, with few exceptions, was buried feather-deep in the breast of a French skirmisher. It was in vain that they replied to that blighting volley with cross-bow, bolt, and javelin, no missiles could compete with that unrivalled archery; the advance was strewn upon the ground in heaps of slaughtered carcasses; the host wavered and was about to fly—but then arose the trumpet-like shout of Dunois.

“On! on! Orleans! Orleans! to the rescue! Close up!—close up! even to the palisades; it is but a distance that their shot is deadly.”

And, seconding his words by deeds, the powerful knight rushed forth, bearing his pavesse high on his left arm, and his massive axe sweeping in circles round his head—a dozen arrows struck him on the crest and corslet and glanced off harmlessly—on he rushed, though every step was planted on a writhing corpse, and none came on to second him—he reached the base of the rampart, his axe smote on the timbers of the palisade, and down came stones, and beams, and shaft, and javelin, ringing and rattling upon his heavy shield and panoply of proof; yet he heeded them no more than the oak

heeds the thistle-down that floats upon the summer wind. Valor, like terror, is contagious ; with a mighty effort a dozen knights broke through the throng of their own disordered soldiery, and forced their way to the side of the bold bastard—but not like him unharmed ; an arrow skilfully directed against the vizor of young Delaserre, shot through the narrow aperture, and clove his brain ; a ponderous axe, hurled from the hand of Salisbury, crushed through the *cerveilliere* of Montmorency, as though it were a bowl of crystal ; yet still undauntedly they hurried on—and now they joined their leader. The dust already eddying upward, the heavy masses of wood and timber that rolled down beneath his ponderous blows, showed that his attack was prosperous as it was gallant. The din of blows given and taken, hand to hand, between or above the broken palisades, was mingled with the hurtling of the arrows, the shouts or cries of the fierce combatants.

“ On ! on ! ” the voice of Dunois rose again above the confusion—“ On ! on ! the breach is opened !—Orleans and victory ! ” but as he spoke, a stone heavier than any yet hurled against him, fell from a huge machine full on his lifted pavesse ; his arm fell powerless by his side, and the tall warrior reeled backward from the breach, dizzy and helpless as a child—but yet more evil was the fate of his companions ; one dropped, crushed out of the very form of humanity, by the same stone ; and then a flood of boiling oil was showered upon the heads of the weak and wearied remnant.

“ St. George for merry England !—forward brave hearts, and drive them from our palisades ! ” and with the word, Bedford and Huntingdon leaped down with axe and espaldron, while many a youthful aspirant rushed after them in desperate emulation. The gallant Dunois, roused like a wearied war-horse to the fray, fought fearlessly and well ; yet his blows fell no longer, as was their wont, like hammers on the anvil—

his breath came thick, the sweat rolled in black drops through the bars of his vizor ; he staggered beneath the blade of Bedford. At this perilous moment, a roar, louder than the ocean in its fury, louder than the Alpine avalanche, burst on their senses. "God aid the king," cried Dunois, even in this extremity careless of his own peril—"it is the British ordnance !"

The smoke rolled like a funeral pall over the fray, that still raged beneath it ; and a mingled clamor, as of thousands in agony and despair, smote on the ears and appalled the hearts of the half-conquered Frenchmen. The column of the king had advanced upon the very muzzles of the ordnance, as with heavy loss from the archery they too had passed the channel of the stream, and had but narrowly escaped annihilation. A mounted messenger came dashing through the strife, "Draw off your men, Dunois," he shouted from a distance ; "draw off—no victory to-day !"

But he shouted to no purpose, for the bold ear which he addressed was for a space sealed in oblivion deep as the grave—his well-tried sword had shivered in his grasp, stunned by the sweeping strokes of Bedford—he had fallen, and must there have perished, had not a young knight, in azure panoply, bestriven him, and battled it right gallantly above his senseless form.

It was the maiden ! Fresh and unwearied she sprang to the strife from which she had refrained before, and he, her terrible antagonist, the unvanquished Bedford, reeled before her blows.

Gathering himself to his full height as he retreated from the sway of her two-handed blade, he struck a full blow with his axe upon her crest ; and again the treacherous helm gave way—her dark hair streamed on the wind, and her eagle eye met his with an unblenching gaze ; at the same point of time an ar-

row grazed her neck, and quivered in the joint of her gorget. "Fly! fly!" shouted the crowd behind her, who had again rallied during her combat with the regent—"fly! fly! the maid is slain!"

"Fly not, vile cravens—fly not," she cried in tones clearer than human, as she pressed bare-headed after the retreating Bedford—"fly not, the time hath come, and victory is ours!—Joan! Joan! to the rescue! Victory! God sends—God sends us victory! The sun is in the west—our toils are ended!"

At her high voice, many an eye was turned toward the western horizon, and her well-remembered prophecy cheered their faint hearts and nerved their faltering courage. The day had been spent, had been forgotten, in the fearful strife, and the sun was hanging like a shield of gold a hand's breadth high in the horizon. Like wild-fire in the stubblefield the clamor spread—"Heaven fights for France! Victory!—God sends us victory!" and still, at the cry, they pressed onward with renewed vigor to the breach. It was in vain that Salisbury and Talbot strove—that Bedford plied his axe, taking a mortal life at every blow—for a panic, a fatal, superstitious panic, had seized on their victorious countrymen. At every charge of the encouraged Frenchmen—at every repetition of the cry, "Heaven fights for France," they shrunk back timid and abashed; and it was of necessity, though with evident reluctance, that the leaders of the English war gave orders to withdraw the men from the sally, and trust only to the defence of their entrenchments.

There was a brief pause—a silence like that which precedes the burst of the thunder-cloud—as Joan arrayed her followers—"Forward," she cried, "and conquer! Heaven has given us the strength—the valor—and the victory!—Forward and conquer!" and with the word, the living torrent

was let loose against the breach. It was but a girl—a weak, bare-headed girl—that led them, mingling in deadly strife with the best champions of the day; yet superstition and success were stronger than the shield or crested casque. Her cry struck terror to the hearts of the defenders; her sword was scarcely parried in its sweeping blows; her foot was planted on the summit of the breach; her sacred banner floated above her head. From point to point her prophecy had been accomplished; the sun had sunk in the west, and his last rays had shone upon the triumph of the French—upon the rout, the carnage, and the desolation of their island foemen.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CORONATION.

Lord Bishop, set the crown upon his head.

KING HENRY VI.

THE capture of the English lines at Orleans was not a solitary or unsupported triumph of the French. On the succeeding morning not a trace of the discomfited islanders could be discovered from the walls of the long-beleagured city, save the shattered and deserted bastions so lately occupied by their green-frocked archery, and the heaps of their unburied dead, which choked the trenches, and tainted the pure atmosphere with their charnel exhalations. Nor was this all. The confidence of France had been restored to a degree unwonted, if not unknown, before. The virgin fought not but to conquer. Gergeau was taken by assault; the daring girl mounting the foremost, and carrying the walls, though wounded, with un-

daunted spirit. Beaugency opened its gates at the first summons; and the British garrison, which had retired to the castle, yielded on fair condition. Roused from his long inaction by this series of bright successes, the constable of France levied his vassals to share the triumphs of the royal army. Nor were the English idle. Bedford, who had by dint of unexampled perseverance collected some six thousand men to reinforce the relics of the host which, under the brave but wary Talbot, still kept the field, effected his junction at Patai-en-Beauce, but effected it not unmolested. "We must give battle," cried the heroic Joan; "we must give battle to the English were they horsed upon the clouds—ay! and equip ourselves with right good spurs for the pursuit."

She fought again, and was again successful; and this day more than all decided the fortunes of the land. The British troops, struck down from their high pitch, heart-sick with superstition, and half-defeated before a blow was stricken, scarcely awaited the first onslaught of the French, who charged with a degree of confidence that insured the result by which it was so fully justified.

And now the object of the maiden's mission was brought forth in council. "To Rheims," she cried, "to Rheims! it is the will of God!" To every argument that was adduced against her, she had no other answer. "To this end am I inspired—to this end was I sent—that I should conduct this son of France in triumph to the walls of Rheims, and crown him with the diadem of Clovis. The way is clear before us—the sword of the Most High hath fallen on the foes of France—the victory lacks only its accomplishment!"

It was in vain that Richmond the gallant constable opposed the scheme as visionary, the march as desperate. The haughty spirit of Charles himself was now aroused, and his best counsellors, Dunois, La Hire, and D'Alençon, approved

the project. The recent services of Richmond were all forgotten ; his disgrace ensued, and in solitude he learned that to say unwelcome truths to princes is a counterpoise to the most exalted merit, to the most splendid virtues.

The army marched through a waste tract of country, occupied by the troops of England, hostile or disaffected ; without provisions, equipage, or baggage ; with banners waving, and music pealing, like some gay procession in the high-tide of peace, the army marched for Rheims. No human forethought could have calculated the effect—no human intelligence could have divined the wonderful result. Defeat, destruction, and despair, could only have been looked for—these the natural, the almost certain consequences of such a step. They marched, and every fortress sent its keys to Joan in peaceable submission ; every city threw its gates apart for her admission ; the country people flocked in thousands to behold the pomp, to glut their eyes with gazing on the heavenly maiden, to tender their allegiance to the king—to bless, and almost to adore the savior of their country. Not a fort was guarded by the British archery ; not a bridge was broken to delay her progress ; not an enemy was seen throughout the march. The spirit, the enthusiastic spirit of the prophet-maiden, had spread like a contagious flame throughout the land ; the confidence in her had wrought the miracle ; the valor of the determined was augmented ; the doubts of the wavering dispersed ; the fears of the timid put to flight. Beneath the walls of Troyes, for the first time, was her career disputed. The drawbridges were up ; the frowning ramparts bristled with pikes and partisans ; the heavy ordnance levelled, and the lintstocks blazing in the grasp of the Burgundian cannoniers.

The army was arrayed for the assault ; ladders were hastily collected ; mantelets and pavesses were framed as best they might be, on this emergency unlooked for and ill-omened.

The bold visage of Dunois was graver than its wont, and the gay jest died on the lips of D'Alençon. Well did those politic commanders know that to be checked was in itself destruction. Founded upon the widely-credited report that their success was certain, it was indeed secure. But let that superstitious faith be shaken, and the spell was broken. Let but the English learn that victory were not impossible, and they would be again victorious. Let but the French discover that Joan might be defeated, and they would faint again and fly before their foemen. Now, then, was to be the touchstone of their power, the proof of their success; and now—it would be scarce too much to say—those undaunted leaders trembled, not for themselves, nor with a base and coward fear; but with a high and patriotic apprehension for the safety of their country and their king, for the accomplishment of their designs, for the well-being of the myriads intrusted to their charge.

Bows were already bent, and lances levelled, when the maid herself rode forth. All armed, from spur to gorget, in her azure panoply, but with her beaming features and dark locks uncovered by the *cerveilliere* or vizor of her plumed helmet, she rode forth a bow-shot in the front. The consecrated banner was elevated in her right hand, while with her left she turned and wound the fiery charger with an easy government, that well might be considered the result of supernatural powers. Her sheathed sword hung by its embroidered baldric from the shoulder to the spur; her mace-at-arms and battle-axe were ready at the saddle-bow; her triangular shield of Spanish steel was buckled round her neck; yet fully equipped for war, her errand was of peace.

“Jesu Maria!” she cried, “good friends and dear,” in accents so trumpet-like in their intense and thrilling clearness, that every ear in either host caught the sounds, and every bosom throbbed at their import. “Good friends and dear—

for so with you it rests to be—lords, burgesses, inhabitants of this fair town of Troyes, the virgin, Joan, commands ye—that ye may know it from the King of heaven, her liege and sovereign lord, in whose most royal service she abideth every day—that you shall make true homage to this gentle king of France, who soon shall be at Rhéims, and soon at Paris, who standeth now to the fore! By the help of your King, Jesus, true and loyal Frenchmen, come forth to succor your king, Charles—so shall there be no blame!”*

For a moment there was a pause—but for a moment only. The spears fell from the hands of the defenders; the banners were lowered; the gates opened. The Burgundian garrison retired; the citizens of Troyes rushed forth with joyful acclamations, casting themselves prostrate before the charger of the maiden, covering her stirrups with their kisses, and shedding tears of unfeigned happiness.

The army reached the brow of the last hill that overlooks the rich and lovely district in which the ancient town of Rheims is situated, and never did a sight more glorious meet the eyes of youthful monarch than that which lay outstretched before him. It was early in the month of July, the earth gay in its greenest pomp of foliage, its richest flush of bloom; the heavens dazzlingly blue; the air mild and balmy; the wild landscape diversified with its laughing vineyards, its white hamlets, its shadowy forests; the silvery line of the river Vele flashing and sparkling in sunshine; and the gray towers of Rheims arising from a mass of tufted woodland in the centre of the picture; and all this was his—his heritage—his birthright—wrested from his hand by the mailed gripe of the

* For the singular, and as we should now consider them, almost blasphemous, antitheses, of the speech of Joan, the author is not answerable. This strange medley of feudalism, superstition, and loyalty, being a true and authentic document.

invader—redeemed, recaptured, but to be restored by the fair, frail being, who sat beside him, her bright eyes flashing with triumph, and her whole frame quivering with the well-nigh unearthly rapture of the moment.

Before their feet the road fell rapidly into a deep ravine with sandy banks, partially shadowed by stunted shrubs, and patches of furze with its dark prickly masses beautifully contrasted by its golden bloom; beyond this gorge lay a thick woodland, through which the highway might be seen wandering in irregular curves, with a license not often found in the causeways of La belle France. On the summit of this hill, the monarch and his immediate train had halted, while the advanced guard, a brilliant corps of light-armed cavalry—prickers, as they were termed, with long, light lances for their only weapon, and mounted cross-bowmen, filed slowly forward, company after company, veiling their gay banners, and saluting with trailed weapons and bended heads, as they passed, the presence. In the rear the long array came trooping on; for miles and miles the champaign country was overrun with scouring parties, and light detachments, hurrying in concentric lines toward the place of their destination; while the causeways were so thronged as to be almost impassable, with solid columns of men-at-arms, trains of artillery, and all the paraphernalia of an army on the march.

The light-armed horsemen, file after file, swept out of sight, and still as they were lost in the recesses of the shadowy woodland, fresh troops mounted the summit, and deployed from column into line, until the whole ridge of the hill was covered with a dense and threatening mass, in the dark outlines of which it would have required no unnatural stretch of fancy to discover the likeness of a thunder-cloud; while the dazzling rays of the sun flashed back from casque or corslet might have passed for the electric fluid.

Tidings had reached the army, at the halt of the preceding night, that Rheims like Troyes was garrisoned with a Burgundian force of full three thousand lances ; a power, which, amounting to five times that number of men-at-arms, it would have been an arduous task for Charles to encounter in the open field ; and which, when fighting from the vantage ground of wall and battlement, and under the guidance of warriors so renowned as the counts of Saveuse and of Chatillon-sur-Harne, he could not even hope to conquer.

It was for this, then, that the royal army halted, till their prickers might return with tidings from the vicinage of Rheims, lest, upon marching down from the strong eminences which it now occupied, it should become entangled among the swamps and thickets of the forest, and so be taken by the foe at disadvantage. Not long, however, were they compelled to tarry ; for the troops had scarcely piled their arms, and the fires were not yet kindled to prepare the mid-day meal, ere a sound of music came faintly up the wind ; so faintly, that it could not be discovered whether it were a point of war, or a mere peaceful flourish that was uttered by the distant trumpets. A moment ensued of thrilling interest—of excitement almost fearful—then was heard the clang of hoofs, and a pricker-spurred fiercely up the hill. “To arms,” he cried, “to arms, the enemy are in the field—to arms !” Then came the quick, stern orders of the leaders ; horses were unpicqueted, and riders mounted ; the preparations for the feast made way for preparations of a sterner nature. Another moment brought in another rider—a column of cavalry was already entering the forest, at the least five thousand strong, but yet their Burgundian cross. Gradually the din of the music approached, and the notes might be distinguished. Trumpet, and kettle-drum, and cymbal, sent forth their mingled strains, but not in warlike harmony. Anon the cavalcade drew nigh, and, like the music

which had preceded its arrival, it was peaceful. Heralds and pursuivants rode in the front on snow-white horses, with trumpeters on foot, and grooms beside their bridle-reins; then came the burgesses of Rheims in their embroidered pourpoints of dark taffeta, with golden chains about their necks, and velvet caps above their honest features; minstrels and jongleurs followed, with here a cowled priest, and there a flaunting damsel of the lower class, crowding to see the show. Before the steed of the chief echevin strode a burly-looking servitor in the rich liveries of the city, carrying a gorgeous standard emblazoned with the quarterings of Rheims, while on a velvet cushion by his side, his fellow bore the massive keys, their dark and rusty iron contrasting strangely with the crimson velvet and the golden fringes of the cushion which supported them.

"Tête Dieu, my Dunois," cried Charles, with an exulting smile. "These are no spears of Burgundy, nor shall we need to break one lance to win our entrance? Lo! the good citizens come forth to greet us. All thanks to thee, bright maiden."

"All thanks to Him who sent me—all praises and all glory!" replied the virgin. "Not my arm—not the arm of man, not all the might of warfare could else have forced a passage hither! Be humble and be grateful, else shall thy fall be sudden and disastrous, as thy rising hath been unexpected, and superb withal, and joyous!"

Yet as she spoke the words of calm humility, her mien belied her accents. Her eyes sparkled, her bosom heaved, her bright complexion went and came again, and her lip paled, as the blood coursed more fiercely than its wont through her transparent veins. As the column of the citizens approached, the pursuivants, the heralds, and the minstrels, opening their ranks on either hand, and filing to the left and right of the

royal presence, she flung abroad the folds of her consecrated banner, and gave her fiery steed the spur, till he caracoled in fierce impatience against the curb which checked him.

"All hail!" she cried in a voice that all might hear, so clear it was and thrilling, though pitched in the low tones of feeling—"all hail, Charles, by the special providence of Heaven, that shalt, ere the sun sinks, be king and lord of France!"

For an instant there was a pause, and then, "all hearts and tongues uniting in that cry," the woodlands echoed for miles around to the shout, louder than the shock of charging squadrons: "Life—life to Charles—our true, our gentle king!"

Gayly did the procession then advance; no more of doubt, no more of hesitation as they threaded the leafy vistas of the forest! All was calm, and sunshiny, and bright, to the hopes of the young monarch, as were the limpid waters, and the laughing landscape, and the summer skies, that looked so cheeringly upon his hour of triumph.

A few short hours brought them to the gates of Rheims, and with the clang of instruments, and the deep diapason of ten thousand human voices, Charles and his youthful champion entered that ancient city, the goal of so many labors, the reward of so much perseverance. The streets were strewn with flowers; the walls were hung with tapestries of Luxembourg and Arras; the balconies were crowded with the bright and beautiful; the doorways thronged with happy faces; and the whole atmosphere alive with merriment and triumph. That very night the maréchals of Boussac and Rieu were sent to St. Remi bearing the greetings of the virgin, Joan, to bring thence the holy flask of oil—oil, which, if ancient legends may be credited, had been brought from heaven by a dove to Clovis, when the bold Frank laid the first foundation of the Gallic monarchy.

The morning, so earnestly desired, had at length arrived; the court before the towers of the old cathedral was crowded

well-nigh to suffocation. The archers of the guard vainly endeavored to repress the jovial tumult, backing their Spanish chargers on the mob, or beating back the boldest with the staves of their bows, unstrung for the hour and void of peril. Peers of France in their proud ermined robes and caps of maintenance; knights in their rich habiliments of peace, or yet more nobly dight in panoply of steel, pressed through the crowd unheeded, jostled by the brawny shoulders of clowns or burghers, and over-impatient to join the sacred pomp to think of precedence or ceremony.

Within the holy building, its long aisles thronged with noble forms, and the rays of the early sunshine streaming in a thousand gorgeous dyes upon the assembled multitudes through the richly-traceried panes, stood Charles. Clad as an aspirant for the honors of chivalry, in the pure and virgin white, he bent the knee before the brave D'Alençon, received the accolade, and rose a belted knight. On his right stood the proud bishop of Senlis; the same who had braved the wrath of Charles on his first interview, but afterward had redeemed his error nobly, with the mortal sword before the walls of Orleans, and on the field of Patai. On his left, sheathed, as was her wont, from head to heel in armor, Joan, the preserver. Amidst the thunder of the distant ordnance, and the nearer clamor of the trumpets; amidst the shouts of pursuivant and herald—"Largesse! largesse! notre trez noble, et trez puissant roi!"—and the acclamations of the populace, the diadem of Clovis was placed upon his sunny curls! Barons and vassals, high and powerful, swore on the crosses of their heavy swords, against all foes ever to succor and maintain his cause, so help them Heaven and their fair ladies; and damsels waved their kerchiefs, and their sendal veils, with beaming smiles of exultation from the carved galleries aloft.

Tears—tears of gratitude and happiness—gushed torrent-

like from the eyes of the victorious maiden. She flung herself before the knees of the young monarch, whom she alone had seated on the throne of his high ancestors; she clasped his ankles with her mail-clad arms, and watering his very feet with streams of heartfelt joy—"My task," she cried, "my task is ended!—my race is run!—my victory accomplished! For this, and for this only have I lived, and for this am I content to die! For this do I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast suffered thy servant to perform her duties and thy bidding! and now that thy behest is done, bending before thine imperial throne the knees of her heart, thy servant doth implore thy grace for this thy well-beloved son, and that in peace thou wilt permit her to depart, an humble peasant-maiden to the valley of her birth, and the home of her untroubled innocence!"

"Never," cried the monarch, touched beyond the power of expression by this revelation of deep feeling—"never, my friend, my more than friend—my hope and my deliverance! As thou hast won for me this throne, so teach me now to grace it! As thou hast set upon my head this kingly crown, so guard it for me now! Oh! never speak of quitting me, thou—thou to whom I owe my kingdom and my crown, and, more than all, my country and my country's freedom!"

"Maiden, it must not be," the grave Dunois burst, as he spoke, into the greatest animation; "it must not be! The victory is but half achieved. If thou shouldst leave us now all will be lost. Stay, virtuous and holy one, stay and accomplish thou what thou alone canst furnish! Dunois approves, yet deprecates thy resolution! In the shades of Vaucouleurs lies humble happiness, but honor calls thee to the field of strenuous exertion! Choose between happiness and honor, thou!"

"Thou, too," she answered, "noble Dunois; thou, too? Then to my fate I yield me! If I shall buckle blade again,

France shall, indeed, be free ; but Joan shall never see that freedom. Said I not long ago that Joan of Arc should, in a few brief months, be Joan of Orleans, and thereafter Joan of Rheims ? Lo ! she who said it then, saith now—hear it, knights, paladins, and princes—hear the last prophecy of Joan :—France shall be free, but never shall these eyes behold its freedom ! Dunois hath called her to the choice—the choice 'twixt happiness and honor ! Lo ! it is made. Honor through life—ay, and to death itself, still bright, untarnished, everlasting honor !”

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE.

York.—Damsel of France, I think I have you fast,
Unchain your spirits now with spelling charms,
And try if they can gain your liberty.

KING HENRY VI.

DAYS, weeks, and months, elapsed. The king, now such in truth, with his victorious army and triumphant leaders, swept onward unresisted ; town after town opened its gates ; district after district sent out its crowds to hail the royal liberator, chanting the hymn of victory, the proud *Te Deum*. Twice, since the coronation, had the rival armies met ; once at Melun, and once again before the walls of Dammartin ;—and twice, had the wily Bedford declined the battle ; not, however, as the friends of Charles, intoxicated with success, imagined in their vanity, through doubt or fear ; but from deep craft, and dangerous policy. Well had he studied human nature, in its lights as in its shadows, in its day of exultation as in its moments of

despair—that ablest of the British chieftains. He saw that the French were elated to the skies, buoyed up beyond the present reach of danger or despondency, by a confidence in their divinely-chartered leader; and farther yet than this, by a proud consciousness of their own strength and valor. In such a state of things, in either host, it needed not the penetration of a Bedford to discover, that till some change should come about, it would be worse than madness to try the field. He waited therefore—but he waited like the tiger, when he meditates his spring. His knowledge of mankind assured him that, ere long, success would lead to carelessness, incaution to reverses, and reverses to the downfall of that high spirit, which had, in truth, been the winner of all the victories of Charles.

Bedford was not deceived. Ingratitude, the bane alike of monarchs and republics—“ingratitude more strong than traitors’ arms”—struck the first blow—fate did the rest. On every side the English were trenched in with new opponents, or encumbered with false friends, irresolute allies. In Normandy the constable of France was up and doing; and so celebrated were his talents, so rapid his manœuvres, and so formidable his increase of power, that the regent deemed it wise to quit at once the walls of Paris, against which the maiden and the king were even then advancing, that he might make head, while there was yet time, against this fresh assailant. Scarce had he marched, when with Xaintrailles and Dunois, and all his best and bravest, Charles hurried to seize, as he expected, by an easy and almost unresisted charge, his country’s capital.

At the first, too, it seemed as though his towering hopes were again about to be rewarded with success. Beneath a storm of shafts and bolts from bow and arbalest, with the holy banner of the maiden, and the dark green oriflamme displayed,

the chivalry of France rushed on against the guarded barriers, Joan leading, as was her wont, the van. Down went the outer palisades, beneath the ponderous axes; the defenders had scarce time to breathe a prayer, before the living flood of horse rushed over them. Down went the barricade, and on, still on, they charged. The barbican was won, despite the shower of cloth-yard arrows, and the streams of boiling oil and blazing pitch, that fell from embrasure, crenelle, and battlement. A single moat alone lay between them and Paris. The inner walls, weakly defended, and devoid of ordnance, were all that barred out the monarch from his heritage.

"What, ho! our squires," shouted Joan, curbing her charger, on the brink of the fosse; "What, ho!—bring up our paveses—ladders to scale the rampart—hooks to force down the drawbridge! Lo! the knave bowmen muster on the walls—our cross-bows to the front! St. Denys, and God aid!"

"St. Mary!" cried Dunois, who, erect in his stirrups, was making desperate but fruitless efforts to sever the chains of the drawbridge with his espaldron—"St. Mary! we are lost, an' these false varlets tarry! What, ho! bring mantelets and pavesses, or we shall perish, like mere beasts of game, beneath this archery of England!"

As he spoke, shaft after shaft rattled against his Milan coat, but bounded off innocuous and blunted. Not so his comrades; for the fatal aim of that brave yeomanry brought down full many a gallant knight, full many a blooded charger; yet ever and anon the battle-cry rose fiercely from the rear—"On! on! St. Denys, and God aid!" While pressing forward, to partake the sack which they believed to be in actual progress, the squadrons of reserve cut off alike the possibility of succor and retreat!"

"Ha!" shouted Dunois, once again, as he snatched a cross-bow from the hands of a cowering Genoese, and launched its

heavy quarrel against the archers. "Ha! good bow!" The sturdy peasant fell headlong from the rampart; but what availed the death of one. Again and again, the steady arm of the bastard shot certain death among them, while, confident in his impenetrable harness, he defied their slender missiles—but it was useless. A louder shout from the battlements, a closer volley—and with a faint cry, between a shriek of anguish and a shout of triumph, the maiden reeled in her stirrups, and fell heavily to the earth. "Back—back!" was now the word. "Save him who can! Flight is our only chance!" and they did fly in hopeless disarray—trampling down, ay, and smiting with the sword those of their countrymen, who were stretched wounded beneath their horses' feet, or who, bolder than the rest, would have persuaded or compelled them to return. Dunois alone escaped the base contagion; he had already sprung from his destrier to rescue the dismounted maiden, when Gaucourt and La Hire seized him by either arm, and dragged him into the press, from which no efforts of his own availed to extricate him, till the last barricade was passed. Then, then, at length, they paused; aware, for the first time, that they were unpursued; that no foe had sallied; no cause prevented the otherwise inevitable capture of the metropolis, save their own want of concert and unreasonable panic.

"False friends, and craven soldiers!" cried Dunois, in low and choking tones; "dearly, right dearly, shall ye rue this foul desertion! The Maid of Arc, the liberator of our country, the crowner of our king, the prophet of our God, lies wounded, if not already made a captive, before the gates of Paris! Ho! then to the rescue. Rescue for the Maid of Arc! A Dunois to the rescue!"

But no kindred chords were stricken in the breasts of his companions; Xaintrailles was silent; De La Hire bit his lips, and played with the hilt of his two-handed sword; Gaucourt

shrugged his strong shoulders, and muttered words inarticulate, or lost within the hollow of his helmet ; but Charles himself—the deepest debtor to the maiden who had raised him from ignominy and defeat to triumph and a crown—Charles himself answered coldly, “ As thou wilt, fair cousin ; be it as thou wilt, but methinks she is already past reach of rescue, even if those knave archers have not secured their prisoner, within the walls of Paris. An hour hath flown since that same arrow pierced her ! ”

“ And if yon English archers have secured her—what are yon English archers but men?—and men whose backs we have beheld more often than their visages, while Joan was here to lead us ? And if she be within the walls of Paris—what are those walls but stone and mortar, less strong, less lofty, and less ably manned, than scores which Joan has mounted ? And what are we, that we should see the champion of our country perish, without one struggle to preserve her ? My liege, my liege, this is cold counsel, not to say coward ! If Charles owe nothing to the savior of his diadem, Dunois at least will spare him the reproach of Christendom for base ingratitude ! ” Thus the bold bastard spoke ; he unclasped the fastenings of his casque, and, waving it aloft in his right hand, he galloped back alone on his chivalrous and Christian errand.

Shame at length prevailed. First one, and then another knight turned bridle, and spurred steed, to follow—a dozen left the monarch’s presence—a score—a hundred—but gallop as they might, they could not overtake black Olivier ; they reached the shattered barbaican—Dunois had vanished beneath its gloomy portal, flinging his casque before him into the lines of the enemy. His followers might hear it clash and rattle on the pavement ; but ere those sounds had ceased, they caught the din of arms, and over all the shout of Dunois, “ Orleans ! Orleans to the rescue ! ”

Well had it been for Joan, that when she fell, her foemen were parted from her by full moat and locked portcullis. A captain of the guard had recognised her person; but in their eagerness to prevent the ingress of the foe, they had prevented their own power of sallying. The keys were in charge of the governor; the governor was in the far Bastile—a watch was set upon the turrets with commands to shoot her to the death, should she attempt to escape; a messenger was despatched in all haste to the citadel to seek the keys. Once, as she rallied from the effects of her wound, the maiden raised her head, and on the instant an arrow grazed her crest. With the speed of light the truth flashed on her mind, and she lay passive, hoping, yet hardly daring to expect, a rescue. An hour passed—an hour that seemed longer, to the faint and tortured girl, than a whole day of battle. There was a bustle on the walls; the blocks of the drawbridge creaked and groaned; the chains clashed heavily—it fell! The bolts of the heavy gate shot back, the leaves were violently driven open; armed footsteps clanked along the timbers of the bridge. An archer on the ballium bent his yew bow, and drew the silken cord back to his ear; for he had seen a movement in the form, which had lain motionless so long that he had deemed it lifeless. She had drawn her limbs, which had lain at their full extent, beneath her, as though in readiness for a spring; she had clutched her dagger, in desperate resolution to be slain, not taken. The yeoman's aim was true; the point of the arrow ranged with an aperture in the damsel's corslet; death had been certain had he loosed the string.

“Nay, shoot not, Damian; the witch is well nigh sped already; and our comrades close on her haunches. Lo, even now they hold her.”

The archer lowered his weapon at the warden's sign; and in truth relief did seem so hopeless, rescue so far beyond the

bounds of possibility, that to have shot might well have been deemed an act of needless mercy. The foremost soldier had already stretched out his hand to seize her, when she started to her feet, and, as the man, thrown off his guard by the suddenness of the movement, faltered, sheathed her poniard in his throat. At the same point of time the empty helmet of Dunois rolled clanging through the archway; and the bold bastard, whose approach had been unheard amid the tumult of the sally, dashed bareheaded on the scene of action. His axe was brandished round his head, then hurled with the directness and almost with the force of a thunderbolt; the captain of the guard was dashed lifeless to the earth; and ere they had recovered from their surprise, another, and another, of the captors bit the dust around him. "In! in!" shouted a loud voice from the walls; "in Englishmen! Room for the archery!" But the confusion was too great. Their momentary panic past, the knights of France redeemed their character; there was no check, no faltering; bravely as Dunois had charged, they followed him; and ere the sallying party had sufficient time, by bugle-note and banner-cry, to rally and recross the bridge, a score of the pursuers had passed the barbican, and filled the esplanade.

Down thundered the portcullis, and uprose the bridge; leaving the wretches who had sallied forth in haughty triumph, to a miserable fate. And miserable was the *melée*, that not a bowman drew his string, lest he should slay a comrade. As soon as he had been relieved, Dunois had borne the damsel, still faint and stunned, to the rear-guard.

"Ha! is it thou, Gaucourt?" he muttered. "Thou wert but backward even now. Save her, however, save her. As well thou as any other."

He spoke in scorn, and well the other knew it; yet not for that dared he to bandy words with the best chevalier of France.

With a calm eye he saw her borne to a place of safety, and then, with a slow step, turned again to join the conflict. But it was well nigh over; a few wounded and weary Britons on foot, and unarmed, save their short swords and quarter-staves—frail weapons against mace and two-handed falchion—staggered to and fro, blind with their wounds, yet battling it to the last against unnumbered odds, while their own comrades stood aloft, unable to protect or rescue them.

"Hold off your hands, fair sirs!" the bastard shouted, in a voice of thunder! "hold off your hands! our victory is won! our prize is gained! the maiden is in safety! Draw off, then, fairly—front to the walls—retire!"

It was sufficient; rescue or no rescue, that frail remnant yielded them to the kind mercies of the conqueror; and with a single and well-ordered movement the paladins drew off their forces, the best armed and best mounted facing the ramparts to the last, though the arrow-shots fell fast around them, till their feebler comrades had filed from out the barbican. Once through the archway, the whole line halted in a serried line of lances, and awaited the commands of him of Orleans.

"Xaintrailles," he cried, "lead on! Gaucourt hath borne the maiden hence erewhile. Commend me to the king. Lead on! Adieu!"

With a heavy tramp the knights passed onward, but the count de Xaintrailles paused. "And whither," he said; "whither, thou?"

"My casque," replied Dunois. "I, too!" answered the count; "bareheaded thou amid the shafts of those rogue archers, and that untended?—never, by the bones of my father—never!"

"Tarry, then, thou, and hold me, Olivier, till I go fetch it thence," cried Dunois; then, without waiting a reply, he flung the rein to his companion, and holding his triangular buckler

aloft, strode steadily forth into the open space, whereon no shelter intervened to dazzle the eyes of the archers, or to protect the object of their aim.

As first he crossed the threshold of the barbican, a dozen arrows rattled against his armor, while a hundred others aimed at the portal whizzed through it harmlessly. Still he advanced, unharmed as yet and fearless: again the bows were bent, again shafts were notched and fitted to the string.

"Hold, for your lives, ye varlets; harm him not," cried a voice of authority. "Now, by my faith, it is Dunois! My noble friend, what wouldst thou?"

"Ha! Salisbury, good knight, and true," returned the Frenchman. "I knew not thou wert here. Gramercy for thy caution, else had it fared with me right hardly. There lies my casque, beside the fosse; I flung it there anon to win it hence, as best I might, by strong heart and keen blade. Come down, I prithee, Salisbury, that we may prove it here which is the better knight; thou hast the vantage on thine head—but hold thine archery aloof and I will stand the venture!"

"Who looses a shaft, dies!" shouted the baron, as he perceived a hostile movement among his soldiery, at the bold vaunt; "and thou, Dunois, take up thy casque, and get thee hence betimes, else will these knaves riddle thee, despite me. Begone, fair sir, and trust me we shall meet, and that right early!"

"Thanks for thy courtesy, and trust me, Salisbury; times shall go hard with Orleans if he requite it not!"

He donned his helmet, waved his hand to his renowned antagonist, and joined his comrade, as carelessly as though he had but parted from him in the joyous chase, and returned to his side bearing the sylvan trophies at his saddle-bow.

It was dark night when they reached the host, in triumph it

is true, for they had saved the savior of France ; but in the host there was no triumph, no confidence, no hope. The first blow had been stricken ; the wheel of fortune had turned once round upon its downward revolution ; the victors had been vanquished. The maid herself, though her surgeons spoke but lightly of the wound, was in a sad, despondent mood, far different from her wonted spirit.

"Now," she said—"now would I willingly go hence ; my task is ended ; my race run !"

"Wherefore," inquired her preserver—"wherefore this dark presentiment ? Is aught revealed to thee, from those who sent thee on thy mission ? or hast thou warning of thy death in anything ?"

"Not so !" she answered ; "I knew but this—God sent me hither ; sent me to raise the siege of Orleans ; to crown my king at Rheims—no more ! Than this I have no further mission : no further duty ! Oh ! may it please the king to spare his servant !"

From that day forth the star of Charles declined. No other attempt was made on the metropolis ; no stricken field was fought, no boroughs taken ; the ardor of the troops was frittered away in trifling skirmishes, wherein the English gained as much as the French lost, of confidence. Ere long the tables were turned once again ; the chivalry of France retired to their separate demesnes ; their vassals withdrew to their *metairies* ; the armies were disbanded. A few scattered garrisons were maintained in fortified towns and castles, while the troops of Bedford kept the field, and again ventured to open their trenches, and beleaguer their late victorious foemen. Compiègne, closely invested, was well nigh driven to surrender, by the united force of England and of Burgundy ; with a selected company Joan beat up their quarters one moonless and tempestuous night, spiked half their battering cannon, and, without

the loss even of a single sergeant, made good her entrance to the town. For a brief space, the spirits of the citizens surged up against the pressure of calamity; the valor of the maiden relumed for awhile their falling fortunes, shining out itself more brightly, as it drew nigher to the hour of its extinction. Day after day some new annoyance of the enemy was devised; at one time a convoy was cut off; at another, a picquet was utterly destroyed; now a mine exploded beneath the trenches; and then, while the attention of the assailants was attracted to one quarter, provisions, men, and munitions, were introduced from another. The summer passed away, with its gay flowers and bright hopes—autumn wore onward, with its sere foliage, its brilliant skies, and all the melancholy thoughts it can not fail to conjure up in every feeling bosom—winter drew nigh, with its first hoar-frosts, and its nipping showers; the trees were leafless, the spirits of the besieged waxed faint and drooping; their garnered stores were wasted, their wells were dried, their wine-butts had run low. Famine and despair had traced their painful lines on every countenance; the hopes of all were at the lowest ebb. In this dark crisis the maiden saw the need of instant energy. “We will cut our way through them,” she cried, “once again! With our good swords and gallant steeds, will we win us provender; courage, St. Denys and God aid!”

The wind wailed mournfully as she set forth, before the dawn of day, on this her last excursion; the atmosphere was raw and gusty; a thin, drizzling rain had saturated every plume and banner, till they drooped upon their helms, or clung around their staves in dismal guise of sorrow; the very horses hung their heads, and neither pawed nor pranced at the call of the war-trumpet. It was remembered, too, in after-days that the consecrated sword of Joan, rusted perchance by the dank air of morning, seemed loath to leave the scabbard; and

that her charger swerved as in terror, though there was naught in sight, from the city-gates, and could be forced beyond the threshold only by the utmost of the rider's strength and skill.

"Once more in the free air," she cried exultingly; "once more on a fair field, with France's foes before us! Charge, then, my friends; charge cheerily; charge all! Better to fall beneath the buckler bravely, than to perish piecemeal in the guarded chamber! The standard of our God is waving o'er us—the soil of our birth is beneath our feet! Victory is in our hands—vengeance and victory! Once more we cry, "God aid! St. Denys, and set on!"

And they did set on right bravely: straightway they charged against the lines, passed them, and all was theirs. A joyous gallop through the open fields; a scattering of convoys; a gathering of rich booty; and with droves of oxen, wains groaning beneath the weight of forage, they turned them homeward at night-fall. A furious onslaught on the British outposts, which lay betwixt the river and the town, led on by Joan in person, was successful; the troops of Burgundy, already on the alert, rushed to the rescue, leaving their own trenches vacant or feebly guarded. The strife was short, but furious—a shrill bugle-note from the further gates of the beleaguered city gave note that the last wain had entered. On the instant the maid drew off her skirmishers, and wheeling her divided forces to the left and the right, rode hastily toward the gate, so to effect her entrance.

Thus far the night had favored them with friendly darkness; now, when their peril was the greatest, the moon burst out in garish brilliancy, revealing every object for miles around, as clearly as it would have showed beneath a mid-day sun. The maiden's stratagem was marked, and, as she wheeled around the walls, a heavy force of archery and men-at-arms, dismounted for the purpose, stole secretly along their trenches,

to cut off her retreat. Such, however, was the rapidity of her manœuvres, that she had reached the barrier before them; her comrades were about her—the bridge was lowered—her triumph was achieved. Soldier after soldier filed inward; yet still she sat upon her docile steed, the last to enter, as she had been the first to gallop forth. All had passed in but three, when there arose a shout of, “Burgundy—a Luxembourg for Burgundy;” and forth from the trenches, under cover of a heavy volley, rushed the dismounted troopers.

“Stand to your arms, true friends!” cried the undaunted maiden; “courage, and all is well!”

All was in vain; one squire turned his steed to join her, but an arrow pierced his vizor, and he dropped from his saddle a dead man. The hoof-tramps of the others, as they dashed across the bridge, smote heavily on her heart—she was deserted! Yet, there was yet time. She whirled her weapon from its scabbard—she smote down a wretch whose hand was on her bridle-rein; she dashed her spurs into the fleet Arab’s side; one other bound had placed her on the drawbridge; it had begun to rise slowly; the dark planks reared their barrier against her. “Treason!” she called aloud, in notes of super-human shrillness. “Lower the bridge! Ho! treason!”

As she spoke, an arrow quivered in her charger’s flank; erect he bounded from the earth ten feet aloft; another pierced his brain, and he plunged headlong. Still, as he fell beneath her, she kept her footing, and with a fearless mien faced her assailants. Even yet one sally—one charge of a determined handful had preserved her, but the charge—the sally—came not; the bridge swung to its elevation, and was there secured.

“Yield, Joan, I take thee to surrender; I, John de Ligny-Luxembourg;” and with the words a stately knight sprang forward to receive her weapon; and with a vengeance did he receive it. The burghers from the ramparts, whereon they

hurried to and fro, incapable, from very terror, of exertion, beheld her as she met him. Her eyes, they said, flashed fire through the bars of her closed vizor, and her stature showed loftier than its wont. Down came the consecrated blade upon the crest of Luxembourg—the sparks, which sprang up from the dented casque, alone had proved the shrewdness of the blow; but the strong warrior reeled beneath the stroke, like a weak infant. Had the sword done its duty, the stout John de Ligny had never more stirred hand or foot; but, like all else, the sword was faithless. It shivered to the grasp, and she stood weaponless. A dark cloud passed before the moon, and the faint-hearted watchers beheld not the capture of the maiden; but the reiterated shouts of thousands, the din of trump and nakir, the shot of cavaliers, and the deep roar of ordnance, announced to the inhabitants of many a league that the champion of her king and country had been betrayed by faithless friends to unrelenting foemen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEATH OF LA PUCELLE.

Warwick.—And hark ye, sirs; because she is a maid,
Spare for no fagots, let there be enough;
Place barrels of pitch upon the fatal stake,
That so her torture may be shortened.

SHAKSPEARE.

THREE months had elapsed, since, in the flower of youth and beauty, in the flush of conquest, and in the accomplishment of all her own—of all her country's aspirations—the Maid of Arc had fallen, through the envious treason of the count de Flavy—he who had shut the gates and raised the bridges of Compiègne against her—into the hands of John de Ligny-Luxembourg—since he, false gentleman and recreant knight, had sold the heroine of France—sold her, despite the prayers, despite the tears and the reproaches of his high-minded lady—sold her for base and sordid lucre to her unsparing foemen. Three months had elapsed of wearisome confinement—not in a guarded chamber—not with the blessed light of heaven streaming, albeit, through grates of iron into her prison-casements—not with the miserable semblance of freedom that might be fancied to exist in the permission to pace the narrow floor—not with the wonted dungeon-fare of the worst malefactor—not with the consolations of religion vouchsafed even to the dying murderer—not even with the wretched boon of solitude! No; in a dungeon many a foot beneath the surface of the frozen earth, with naught of air but what descended through a deep-cut funnel—with naught of light but what was furnished by a pale and winking lamp—loaded with a weight of fetters that

would have bowed the strongest man-at-arms to child-like helplessness—bound with a massive chain about her waist, linking her to the rocky floor—fed on the bread of bitterness, her thirst slaked with the waters of sorrow—her feelings outraged by the continual presence of a brutal soldier, violating the privacies, alike by day and night, of her sad condition, the noble girl had languished without a hope of rescue, without even a dream of liberty or life—taunted by her foes and persecuted—deserted by her friends and utterly forgotten. Yet, though her frame was shrunken with disease, and worn with famine, though her bright eyes were dimmed by premature old age, her stature bent to half its former height, and her whole appearance deprived of that high and lustrous beauty that had of yore been so peculiarly her own; her confidence in Him, whom she believed, erroneously perhaps, but not therefore the less fervently, to have sent her on that especial mission which she had so gloriously accomplished—her confidence in that being whose decrees are, of a truth, inscrutable—was all unshaken. If she had formerly displayed the courage to endure—if she had proved herself the equal of men in the mêlée of active valor, she now showed herself to be endowed in no secondary degree with the calm fortitude of her sex, the uncomplaining, patient resignation to inevitable pain, or inconsolable affliction, which is so much harder to put on than the bold front which rushes forth to meet the coming danger. Day after day she had been led forth from her cold dungeon, to undergo examination, to hear accusations the most inconceivably absurd, to confute arguments, the confutation of which aided her cause in nothing; for when did prejudice, or, yet worse than prejudice—fanatic bigotry—hear the voice of reason, and hear it to conviction. Night after night she had been led back to the chilly atmosphere of that dank cell, hopeless of rescue or acquittal, harassed by persecution, feeble of

frame, and sick at heart, yet high and firm in her uncompromising spirit as when she first rode forth with consecrated blade and banner to raise the siege of Orleans. From the very commencement of her protracted trial she had felt a sure foreknowledge of its termination! She had known that, in the hearts of her judges, her doom was written down already; yet, with a calm confidence that would have well become a Socrates, ay, or the apostle of a holier creed, she had striven to prove her innocence to posterity, at least, if not to the passing day—to eternity, at least, if not to time! When reviled, she answered not—when taunted, her replies were meek but pertinent—when harassed by the simultaneous questioning of her hard-hearted judges, eager to confuse by clamor the weak woman whom they could not confound by sophistry, she was collected as the sagest jurist, undisturbed as though she were pleading another's cause, and not her own. The base Cauchon, the bishop of Beauvais, the bigoted, bribed, fanatic, to whom had been committed the conduct of her judicial murder, strove hard, but strove in vain, to wring from her pale lips some evidence of unholy dealings, for which he might condemn her to the stake—some word of petulance which he might construe into treason.

“Swear,” he cried, in haughty and imperious tones, from his crimson chair of state to the fair, frail girl, who, clad in sackcloth, with bare feet and dishevelled hair, stood at his footstool, upheld by the supporting might of conscious innocence—“swear to speak truth, question thee as we may!”

“I may not swear, most holy bishop,” she replied, and her eye flashed for a moment, and her lip curled as she spoke, so that men deemed it irony—“I may not swear, most righteous judge, since you may question me of that, which to reveal be foul perjury, so should I, if I swore, stand perjured in the same by speech or silence!”

"Swear, Joan of Domremi—most falsely styled of Orleans and of Arc—swear to thy judges that thou wilt seek no rescue—attempt no escape!"

"Be not your fetters strong enough?" she asked in answer; and she half raised her feeble arm to show the weight of rusty steel that had already well-nigh crippled it. "Be not your fetters strong enough—your rock-hewn vaults, where never comes the first-created gift of natural light—your iron cages, and your steel-clad warders—be they not guards enough, that ye would bind me yet more straitly? This will I not swear, O thou most merciful, so shall you not condemn me of faith broken."

"Then thou dost look to rescue—dost hope for liberty—wouldst evade, hadst thou the power, the bonds of Holy Church?"

"To whom should I look for rescue, save to Him who has abandoned his frail servant for her own transgression."

"Ha! she confesses!"

"Mark well the words, sir scribe!"

"Judgment, lord president; a judgment!"

"No need for further question!"

"She has avowed it!"

Such were the disjointed clamors that burst at once in fiendish exultation from the lips of that holy-seeming conclave; but ere the wily bishop could express his sentiments, the maiden again took up the word.

"I have confessed, great sirs, I have confessed transgression. And make not ye the same at prime, at matin, and at vesper, the same avowal? Riddle me, then, the difference, ye holy men, between the daily penitence ye proffer, for the daily sins which even ye confess, and this the free confession of a prisoner—a helpless, friendless, persecuted prisoner! Tell me, lord bishop, what am I that I should suffer judgment

to the uttermost, for the same avowal that thou makest daily, if thou dost obey the bidding of Him whose cross thou hast uplifted ! But ye did ask me if I hope for liberty ; if I would exchange the prison-house, the hall of condemnation, and the bread of tears, for the free air, the blessed sunshine, and the humblest peasant's fare ! Go, ask the wild herds of the forest will they prefer the yoke and the goad, the halter and the stall, to the green-woods and liberal pastures in which their Maker set them ! Go, ask the eagle will he endure the jesses and the hood of the trained goss-hawk, will he choose the perch and mew before the boundless azure ; will he list to the whistle, or regard the lure of the falconer when the thunder is rolling beneath him, when the lightning, which he alone can gaze upon undazzled, is flashing round the aërie his Creator made him to inhabit. If these shall answer yea, then will I do your bidding, and swear to keep my prison, though the chains should be stricken from my limbs, and the door of deliverance opened ; though the fagot were kindled to consume me on the one hand, and the throne of your monarch were tendered on the other ! Then will I swear, sir priest, and not till then !”

Such was the tone, and such the tenor of all her speeches ; ever submissive to the forms, to the ordinances, and to the spirit of religion ; ever professing her faith in Holy Writ ; her whole and sole reliance on the Virgin and her blessed Son ; ever denying and disproving the charge of witchery or demon-worship ; offering to confess under the sacramental seal ; to confess to her very judges, she yet suffered them to know at all times, to perceive by every glance of her eye, to hear in every word of her mouth, that it was the religion they professed, and not the men who professed it, to which her deference was paid, to which her veneration was due.

Still, though they labored to the utmost to force her into such confession as might be a pretext for her condemnation,

the court could by no means so far confuse her understanding, or so corrupt the judges, as to effect its nefarious purpose. With a clear understanding of her own cause, she refused at once, and boldly, to answer those questions on nice points of doctrine which she perceived to have no bearing on her case. On every other matter, she spoke openly and with the confidence of innocence, maintaining to the last, however, that "spirits, were they good or evil, had appeared to her;" but denying that she had ever by sign or periapt, by spell or charm, invoked the aid of supernatural powers, otherwise than by the prayers of the church offered in Christian purity of purpose to the most holy Virgin and her everlasting Son. It was at length proposed that the question should be enforced by the means of torture! But by Cauchon himself the proposition was overruled—not in mercy, however—not in charity toward a weak and suffering woman, but in the deepest refinement of cruelty. Confident, as he then was, that she would be condemned to the fierce ordeal of the fagot and the stake, he spared her the rack, lest, by exhausting her powers of endurance, it might diminish the duration of her mortal agonies. Bitterly, however, was that corrupt judge and false shepherd disappointed when the decisive verdict was pronounced—"Perpetual chains, the bread of sorrow, and the waters of misery!" The courts ecclesiastic had no weapon to affect her life, and for the present the secular arm had dismissed her beyond the reach of its tyrannic violence. The sentence was heard by the meek prisoner in the silence of despair. She was remanded to her living tomb. She passed through the gloomy archway; she deemed that all was over; that she should perish there—there, in that dark abyss, uncheered by the fresh air, or the fair daylight, unpitied by her relentless foemen, unsuccored by her faithless friends; and she felt that death—any death, so it were but speedy—had

been preferable to the endurance of that protracted torture which life had now become to her, who lately fought and feasted at the right hand of princes.

Not all the sufferings, however, of the wretched girl—not all the mental agonies and corporeal pains, that she must bear in silence, could satisfy the fears of England, or the policy of England's regent. It was not in revenge, much less in hatred, that the wise Bedford urged it on the court that they should destroy, not her body only, but her fame. He well knew it was enthusiasm only that had thus far supported her and liberated France. He deemed not, for a moment, that she was either heavenly messenger, or mortal champion; but he felt that France believed in joy, England in trembling! He felt that, dead or living, so she died a martyr, Joan would be equally victorious. Her death, if attributed to vengeance, would but stir up the kindling blood of Gaul to hotter anger, would but beat down the doggedness of Saxon valor with remorse and superstitious terror!

"Ill hast thou earned thy see," he cried, at their first interview, "false bishop! As well she were a horse, and in the field, as living thus a famous prisoner! She must die!—die, sir priest, not as a criminal, but as a witch and heretic! Her name must be a scoff and a reproach to France; her death an honor to her slayers; a sacrifice acceptable to Mother Church, and laudable throughout all Christentie! See it be done, sir! Nay, interrupt me not, nor parley, and thou mayest not accomplish it; others more able, or perchance more willing, may be found, and that right speedily; the revenues of Beauvais's bishopric might serve a prince's turn! See that thou lose them not!" And he swept proudly from the chamber, leaving the astounded churchman to plot new schemes, to weave more subtle meshes for the life of the innocent. Nor did it occupy that crafty mind long time, nor did it need deep

counsel! The sentence of the church decreed that she should never more don arms, or masculine attire! The bishop's eye flashed as it lighted on that article. "Ha!" he muttered. "Here, then, we have her on the hip! Anselm, what, ho! Let them bid Gaspard hither, the warden of the sorceress, and let us be alone!"

He came, and with closed doors they sat in conclave; the highest officer, save one, of holy church; the lowest and most truculent official of state policy! Ear heard not, nor eye saw, the secrets of that meeting; but on the morrow, when the first glimpse of sickly daylight fell through the tunnelled window of her dungeon, the maiden's female garb was gone, and by the pallet bed lay morion and corslet, cuishes, and greaves, and sword—her own bright azure panoply! At the first moment, ancient recollection filled her whole soul with gladness! Joy, triumph, exultation, throbbed in her burning veins; and the tears that rained down full and frequent, tarnishing the polished surface, were tears of gratitude and momentary bliss. Then came the cold reaction, the soul-sickening terror, the prophetic sense of danger, the certainty of treachery. She donned them not, she rose not from her wretched couch, though her limbs were cramped, and her very bones were sore with lying on the hard and knotted pallet. Noon came, and her guards entered; but it was in vain that she besought them, as they would not slaughter a poor maiden, slaughter her, soul and body, to render back the only vestments she might wear in safety.

"'Tis but another miracle, fair Joan;" sneered the grim warden. "St. Katharine, of Ferbois, hath returned the sword she gave thee erst, for victory. Tête Dieu, 'tis well she left thee not the *destrier*, to boot of spurs, and espaldron, else wouldst thou have won through wall of stone and grate of iron! Don them, then, holy maiden; don the saint's gift, and fear not; she will preserve thee!"

And, with a hoarse and chuckling laugh, the churl laid down the scanty meal his cruelty vouchsafed her, and departed.

Thus three days passed away; her prayers for fitting raiment were unheeded; or, if heeded, scoffed at. Meantime the chill air of the dungeon paralyzed her as she lay, with scanty covering, cramped limbs, and curdling blood, on the straw mattress that alone was interposed between her delicate frame and the damp, rock-hewn pavement. On the third day she rose; she donned the fatal armor, all save the helm and falchion, she might not otherwise enjoy the wretched liberty of moving to and fro across the dungeon floor. Scarce had she fastened the last rivet when the door flew open. A dozen men-at-arms rushed in, and dragged her to the chamber of the council. The board was spread with all the glittering mockery of judgment—the brass-bound volumes of the law, the crosier of the church, the mace of state, the two-edged blade of justice, and the pointless sword of mercy. The judges were in session, waiting the moment when necessity should force her to don the fatal armor. From without the clang of axe and hammer might be heard framing the pile for execution, prepared already ere the sentence was pronounced on that doomed victim, condemned before her trial.

“Lo! there, my lords!” cried Cauchon, as she entered, dragged like a lamb to the slaughter. “Lo! there, my lords! What need of further trial? Even now she bears the interdicted arms, obtained as they must have been by sorcery! Sentence, my lords; a judgment!”

And with one consent they cried aloud, corrupt and venal Frenchmen, “Judgment, a sentence!”

Then rose again the bishop, and the lust of gain twinkled in his deep gray eye, and his lip curled with an ill-dissembled smile, as he pronounced the final judgment of the church.

“Joan of Domremi—sorceress, apostate, heretic! Liar, idolater, blasphemer of thy God! The Church hath cast thee from her bosom, excommunicated and accurst! Thou art delivered to the arm of secular justice. And may the temporal flames which shall, this hour, consume thy mortal body, preserve thy soul from fires everlasting! Her doom is said; hence with her, to the fagot!”

Steadfastly she gazed on the face of the speaker, and her eye closed not, nor did her lips pale as she heard that doom, the most appalling, that flesh can not endure.

“Ye have conquered,” she said slowly, but firmly; “ye have prevailed, and I shall perish. But think not that ye harm me; for ye but send me to my glory! And believe not, vain that ye are, and senseless, believe not that, in destroying me, ye can subdue my country. The fires that shall shrivel up this weak and worthless carcase, shall but illume a blaze of vengeance in every Frenchman’s heart that will never waste, nor wink, nor weary, till France again be free! This death of mine shall cost thousands—hundreds of thousands of the best lives of Britain! Living, have I conquered your best warriors heretofore! Dead, will I vanquish them hereafter! Dead, will I drive ye out of Paris, Normandy, Guyenne. Dead, will I save my king, and liberate my country! Lead on, assassins—lead me to the pile! the flesh is weak and fearful, yet it trembles not, nor falters; so does the spirit pine for liberty and bliss!”

Who shall describe the scene that followed; or, if described, who would peruse a record so disgraceful to England, to France, to human nature? England, from coward policy, condemned to ignominious anguish a captive foe! France, baser and more cruel yet, abandoned without one effort, one offer of ransom, one stroke for rescue, a savior and a friend! and human nature witnessed the fell deed, pitying, perhaps, in

silence, but condemning not, much less opposing the decree of murder, sanctioned as it was, and sanctified by the assent of holy church.

It is enough ! she perished — perished as she had lived, undauntedly and nobly. Her fame, which they would have destroyed, lives when the very titles of her judges are forgotten. The place of her torture is yet branded with her name. Her dying prophecy has been fulfilled. A century had not elapsed ere Paris, Normandy, Guyenne, were free from England's yoke ; and every battle-field of France hath reeked, from that day downward to red Waterloo, with blood of England, poured forth like water on the valleys of her hereditary foe.

The maiden perished, and the terror-stricken soldiery who gazed on her un murmuring agonies beheld, or fancied they beheld, a saintly light, paler but brighter than the lurid glare of the fagots, circling her dark locks and lovely features ; they imagined that her spirit visible to mortal eyes, soared upward, dove-like, on white pinions, into the viewless heavens ; and they shuddered, when they found, amid the cinders of the pile, that heart which had defied the bravest, unscathed by fire, and ominous to them of fearful retribution.

CHAPTER XII.

ELEGY.

This admirable heroine, to whom the more generous superstition of the ancients would have erected altars, was, on the pretence of heresy and magic, delivered over alive to the flames, and expiated by that dreadful punishment, for the signal services which she had rendered to her prince and to her native country."—HUME, chap. xx.

THE moon had set behind the tufted hill,
The silent stars—though waning—glimmered still,
The drowsy woods were steeped in voiceless rest,
Dead stillness brooded o'er the water's breast,
The cloudless firmament was spread on high
Dark, but transparent, like the liquid eye
Of Andalusian maid, in orange grove,
Dissolved in rapture at the tale of love.
Nor voice of man, nor cry of passing bird,
Nor ban-dog's bay from cot or keep, was heard;
The wolves were hushed in tangled coverts deep,
The very owls had wailed themselves to sleep:
But fresher yet the breeze came murmuring by,
And colder breathed the air, as morn drew nigh.
The paly streaks, that told of coming day,
Dappled the horizon's verge with feeble ray;
Yet one, who paused on yonder hillock's brow,
Above the blooming plain which smiled below,
Might linger there, nor dream a city's pride
Was slumbering by that sluggish river's side;
Though close beneath, in darkest garb arrayed,
Blent with the forest's gloom, the mountain's shade,
A gorgeous town lay stretched; with streets sublime,
Turret, and dome, and spires of olden time,
Teeming with life and wealth—war's stern array,
The cares of commerce, and the church's sway!
No crash of wheels, nor hum of crowds was there,
Nor neigh of warlike steeds, nor torch's glare;

All whelmed alike in night's oblivious pall!
 The drowsy watchers nodded on the wall—
 The haughty conqueror in his trophied bed—
 The slave in chains—the serf in lowly shed.

But one was there—whose eyes nor night could close,
 Nor opiate draughts could lull to calm repose.
 In bloom of beauty, in youth's earliest flower,
 Condemned to brave the inevitable hour,—
 To quit the verdant earth, the genial sun,
 Ere half her course of womanhood was run,—
 Unbent by years—without one silver hair
 In her bright tresses; ignorant of care,
 Of pain, or sorrow; while the world was new,
 While life was beautiful, and friends seemed true,—
 Doomed to the worst extremity of pain,
 Which flesh can writhe beneath, and not sustain—
 To die in fire, unhouselled and unshriven,
 Scorned by her murderers, and shut out from heaven—
 The maid of Orleans. She whose sacred brand
 Had wrought deliverance to her native land—
 Had slaked the bowstring in the archer's blood,
 And tamed the Island Leopard's* furious mood,
 She who had crowned a monarch—who had raised
 A nation from the dust—whose name was praised
 In court and cottage, from the snowy chain
 Of Alpine Jura, to the western main,—
 Her country's guardian—fettered and alone
 In patient helplessness she sat: no groan
 Passed from her ashy lips; her mind's control
 O'erpowered the whirlwind passion of her soul:
 Calm had she bent the knee, and humbly prayed
 From Him, who gives to all who seek, His aid.
 Humbly she knelt, and self-absolved she rose;
 Tried in success, and purified by woes,

* The original bearing on the royal shield and standard of England were not three lions, but three leopards or libbords, as they are called in the old chronicles, and were first assumed by Edward I.; but were changed, in process of time, for the nobler brute which now contends with the unicorn.

She felt her glowing spirit mount the skies
To meet the witness of "those perfect eyes"
Which endless time nor boundless space can blind,
Secure in her Redeemer, and resigned
To bear all torments, in that narrow road
Which leads, through death, to glory's pure abode.

She turned to take a long, a last farewell
Of the dear country she had served so well—
Of the dark skies—and each peculiar star,
Whose melancholy glance she had loved afar
In her own vale, while France as yet was free!
She saw the Seine rush proudly to the sea—
She saw the foliage in the breezes wave—
The flowery turf, that might not yield a grave
To its heroic daughter: but her mind
Marked not the hurrying flood, nor heard the wind.
Far! far away, her fancy's eye did roam
To the known landscape, and the cottage home;
The willows bending o'er the argent rill;
The rustic shrine, and the familiar hill;
The lawns, where oft her pastured flocks would stray;
The village-green, where still on festive day
She led with artless grace the rural dance,
All hearts subduing with untutored glance;
The cheerful hearth; the calm though humble bed;
The dreamless sleep which hovered round her head;
The days of innocence; the nights of peace.
Alas! that hours like these should ever cease!

Forth rushed the burning tears! not one by one,
But bursting out as mountain streamlets run—
Her mother's face benign, her father's smile,
Palpably beaming on her heart the while,
Till, in that gush of soul, she well might deem
The dead restored by no uncertain dream.
Yet soon that passion passed—a sudden start
Called back the crimson current from her heart,
And flushed her cheek with indignation's tide.

"Shall I—the maid of Arc—shall I," she cried,
 "Weep like a village damsel for some toy
 Of childish love—I, who have known the joy
 Of triumph and high glory—who am styled
 My country's savior—France's noblest child?"

She ceased!—for, as she spake, with plaintive swell
 Answering her words of pride, a ponderous bell
 Rang out its deadly summons! Well she knew
 The sound of terror; and the transient hue
 Which shamed but now the tints of breaking morn,
 Had vanished from her brow; yet still upborne
 By calm submission, and the holy zeal,
 Which erst had nerved her arm to point the steel,
 She stood unblenching. To the place of shame—
 Branded* for ever with the virgin's name—
 They led her forth, in the resistless might
 Of maiden virtue—girt, as to the fight,
 In panoply of mail—her long dark hair
 Unbraided, and her features firm as fair.
 Stern Bedford gazed upon her dauntless mien
 With half-repentant wonder! He had seen,
 Unmoved and fierce, all bursts of female fear,
 Had scorned the sigh, and revelled in the tear;
 But the wild courage of that heavenly face
 Half-moved his iron heart to deeds of grace.
 The free-born archers of the ocean isle
 Reluctant marched along; no vengeful smile
 Mantling their rugged brows—that band had rued
 The victim's valor in their dearest blood,
 Yet not for that would they consign to flame
 A glorious spirit, and a woman's frame!

The goal was gained—and ye do still forbear
 To speak, ye Thunders! Where, O Tempests, where
 Are your tornadoes, that ye do not burst
 Whelming with heavenly streams the flame accurst?

* The *Place de la Pucelle*, at Rouen, where this infamous tragedy was enacted.

They bound her to the stake, and tore away
The arms she bore in many a glorious day:
Yet still she trembled not! They touched the pyre
And the red torrent of devouring fire—
Broad as a chieftain's banner—streamed on high,
E'en to the abhorrent skies!—Yet not a cry
From out the volumed conflagration broke;
Nor sound was heard, save when the eddying smoke
Roared from its crackling canopy! A sob
Heaved the assembled concourse—a wild throb
Of anguish and remorse!—A secret dread!
Sank on the bravest heart, and stunned the firmest head

Fools? did they deem that flames could check thy course,
IMMORTAL FREEDOM—or that human force
Could cope with the ETERNAL! THAT pure blood
Tainted each gale, and crimsoned every flood,
Through Gaul's wide confines, till her sons arose
An overwhelming landstorm* on their foes,
And piled, with hands unbound, a deathless shrine,
And kindled on their hearths a spark divine,
Unquenched for ages, whose immortal ray
Still brightens more and more to perfect day.

* We have here ventured to anglicise the German word *landsturm*, the literal meaning of which we have given above; the application of the word is, "the rising in mass of the whole population against a foreign invader," and the image appeared to us so highly poetical, that, considering the ancient affinities of the German and English languages, we had no hesitation in appropriating the word.

HAMILTON OF BOTHWELHAUGH ;

Or, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

A DARK SCENE IN PARIS.

1565.

PART I.

LET the great Gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipped of justice! Hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue,
That art incestuous! Caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Has practised on man's life! — Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace! — I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

KING LEAR, Act III., Scene 2.

THE shadows of evening had settled down upon the moor and the morass, the tangled brakes and haunted ravines of Et-trick, with more than the wonted gloom of a December's night ; the distant moanings of the heavy gale foretold the storm that was already brewing in the west, and a few broad flakes of

snow were felt, rather than seen, flitting through the gloomy atmosphere. There needed no extraordinary sagacity to foresee the sure approach of one of those tremendous *flurries*, as they are termed, of hurricane and hail, which, bewildering to the stranger in the full light of day, become perilous and appalling even to the hardy natives, when encountered amid the hills in the hours of solitude and darkness.

But it would seem that neither tempest nor obscurity had power to check the solitary rider, who journeyed over hill and dale with such unfaltering resolution, although at times it required all the spirit and address of an accomplished cavalier to force his jaded horse against the gusts which now raved across the unsheltered moorland with almost irresistible violence. The traveller was a tall and powerful man, whose firm seat and martial bearing denoted the practised warrior, even more than the arms, without which, in those days of wrong and rapine, no one could hope to travel in security through districts of a far less doubtful character than the marches of the Scottish border. He wore an open headpiece, or *bacinet* of steel, which, although its polish had been dimmed by the rust of many a wintry day, yet glittered through the haze; a coat of strong buff leather, once richly laced and fringed, though now defaced and soiled, from many a hard-fought field—a heavy gorget and broad plates upon the shoulders, with huge jack-boots extending to the middle of the thigh, completed his defensive arms. His weapons, however, partook strangely of the equipments of a modern trooper, blended with that of the paladins of chivalry; for in holsters, at his saddle-bow, were suspended a pair of *petronels*, as they then were called—of a construction infinitely more cumbrous, and scarce less bulky, than the carabine of Napoleon's cuirassiers—while one of those tremendous espaldrons, or two-handed swords, which had not as yet become entirely obsolete—its huge crossed hilt

rising far above the shoulder of the wearer—jarred against spur and stirrup with its ponderous scabbard.

The noble horse which bore him, carefully as it had been selected for extraordinary points of blood and bone, was now so utterly overdone with toil, that he reeled and tottered before the sweeping blast, as though each freshening of the gale must bear him to the earth. It was not, however, a moment in which the rider could afford to spare his faithful servant; for not only would it have been inevitable destruction to both man and beast, to have passed the night upon those dreary wolds, but the place and the hour had workers of evil more fearful than the pelting shower, in the fierce mosstroopers of that dark and dangerous district; the spur, therefore, and the curb, were the only answers to his frequent stumbles, that the exigencies of the situation would allow. A long and ragged hill, channelled by many a petty torrent, with here and there a stunted bush, or bare crag, looming against the gray horizon, stretched its wearisome length before him; but so bitterly did the arrowy sleet drive into his face, and so deeply was the snow already drifted in every hollow pass and sheltered gully, that it seemed impossible for any human eye to discover the meanders of that rarely-travelled path. No hesitation, however, was to be discovered in the dauntless eagerness with which he still pressed onward, as though every inch of the snow-clad wilderness were as familiar to his ken as the hall of his fathers. An hour of toil and peril had elapsed before the summit was gained, and the prospect, though still wild, became, at every step, less dreary and monotonous. A thick growth of broom and brackens, intermingled with the silver birch, and the still verdant holly, clothed the gradual descent, while, at no wide intervals, some gigantic beech or gnarled and twisted oak remained to tell where once had flourished the mighty Caledonian forest. In the budding time of spring there is no fairer region through-

out the varied scenery of Scotland, than the far-famed banks of Esk ; nor when autumn has cast her rich, though melancholy tints upon the woodland, and the purple bloom of the heather has succeeded to the greenness of the young herbage, is the beauty of the declining, less attractive than that of the mellowing, year ; and even now, although the cold gale sighed and howled among the creaking branches, there was something less mournful in its tones, than when they swept, like the cry of spirits, unmingled with any sound of earth across the naked moor. Ere long the signs of man were apparent, first in solitary pastures girded by dry stone dikes, and framed, as it were, in a dark setting of coppice—then in continuous crofts, with their lines of sheltering sycamores, and here and there the rude peel-house of some feudal proprietor overlooking its rural dependencies from battlement and bartizan. The track was now more clearly marked, following the windings of a tributary to the foaming Esk ; the storm, too, had, in some degree, abated, and the moon shone forth at intervals, from behind the scudding wrack.

The rider, whose faculties had hitherto been occupied entirely in the management of his horse, now looked abroad with an air of satisfaction, as one who has reached, at length, the haven of his hopes ; his eye dwelt serenely on those inanimate objects, which become so dear to the heart when connected with recollections of the home which they environ ; and even his jaded beast gave token, by erected ear and livelier motion, that he too was aware that his toils were well nigh ended. Suddenly, as he wheeled abruptly round a promontory of rock and wood, a gleam of light, as from a distant casement, flashed for an instant on his sight, and was lost again to view, as the ground fell precipitously to the brink of the stream. It seemed an age to the wayworn soldier ere that brief ravine was passed, and the welcome ray again shone out to meet him. For an-

other mile that beacon star was hidden a hundred times by branch or brier, and a hundred times returned to bless his soul ; till at length revealed by the glare of its broad windows, the lordly pile of Woodhouselee stood forth in bold relief from the sheltering foliage of its secluded dell. " Dame Margaret holds high festival to-night," muttered the baron, beneath his thick mustache, but there was a something in the tone which belied the sentiment his words expressed, as if the speaker would fain have imposed upon himself, and quelled some lurking apprehension by the half-affected jest. And, in truth, the noble Hamilton had rather looked for the sad solitude of a well-night widowed bride, than for the mirth and revelry, which became each instant more apparent, not in the illumination only, but in the bursts of merriment and music that were audible in every lull of the western gale.

A year had rolled its heavy hours along, since he had left his lovely Margaret, a newly-wedded bride, in that forsaken hall, to wield his blade in defence of Scotland's ill-starred Mary. A fearful gloom had settled upon the champion's brow, from the sad moment when he had torn himself from the embrace of his distracted wife, and dashed his charger to its speed, nor dared to look behind till the first ridge of hill had concealed the temptations of his happy home. Never, for a moment, had he hoped for success in that ill-omened cause ; never had he deemed that Mary would live again to fill the throne of her forefathers ; but honor—the honor of his name, of his clan, and of his country—called him to lead his hardy spears to join the muster of his princely chief ; and, with a heavy heart, but an undaunted spirit, had he lent his voice to swell the cry of " God, and the Queen," and spurred his charger in the van of every skirmish, till the fatal action of Langside destroyed the last hopes of his devoted party, and drove the hapless Mary to seek protection from the honor and

compassion of her lion-hearted rival, the cruel and despotic Elizabeth. Escaped from the perils of the field, he had fallen into the hands of the infuriated lords, and doomed to seal his allegiance on the scaffold, he had scarcely ever hoped to fold his Margaret to his heart, or bless his infant son, ere he should die. Month after month he lay in hopeless durance, lamenting his own approaching dissolution less—far less—than the effusion of noble blood, which daily glutted the vengeance of his conquerors. Tidings, he had received none; nor was it probable that she, for whom alone he lived, had obtained the least assurance of her husband's situation;—hard she must know his lot, and precarious, if not hopeless, his preservation. For how, when Seyton, and Fleming, and Ogilvie, and Huntly, were dispersed and slain—how should a Hamilton be safe?—Or how—when the adherents of their wretched mistress were prescribed and hunted down like beasts of chase—should Bothwelhaugh alone be unharmed? When a pardon from the regent's hand was tendered to the noble captive, it was with feelings more nearly allied to frenzy than to joy, that he had issued from the gloom of his dungeon, into the free air of heaven. His limbs were again free—but to his mind there was no freedom. Care, and defeat, and failure, had shed a constant twilight over a temperament once buoyant and elastic, beyond the boldest spirits of his age. Fiery, generous, and enthusiastic, he had loved—as he had fought—almost with fury. And, as is not unfrequently the case, the affections of the rash and daring lover were wound up in the well-being of the meekest, fairest flower of Scottish land.

Three months had hardly elapsed between the accomplishment of all his joys in the possession of his gentle Margaret, and the wide alarms that rang through every glen and cleugh, when Mary burst from her imprisonment to draw a deeper ruin on her devoted followers, and her own royal head; yet, in

those three months, the very nature of the borderer had been changed. He, who was never at rest, save in the saddle; who had no pleasures but in the foray or the fight, would loiter now, "from morn to dewy eve," in the bower of his bride. With her he would wander whole days among the lovely scenery of Roslin and of Hawthornden, or pore upon the chansons and virelain, which had been transplanted from the courtly realms of France to the bleak hills of Scotland. With her he forgot the turbulent excitements of his former course in the mild tranquillity of domestic bliss. With her he had resolved to live, heedless of the world's sorrow, and, in her arms, he had hoped to die. He was torn from her, and, from that hour, hope was dead within him. He was condemned to die, but recked not of his doom! He was set free, and he rejoiced not! Even at the instant when he received advices of her welfare, he felt no happiness. A heavy shadow hung over him; a deep-engrossing sense of future evil—which, though his reason might despise it, yet struck his spirits down to the very dust, and cowed his high heart with unresisted terror. When he had mounted his best horse, a pardoned, unattainted noble, it was rather with the air of a wretch on his way to the place of doom, than of a youthful bridegroom speeding, in all the eagerness of joyful hope, to the chosen of his bosom.

Gradually, however, as he neared the house of his fathers, and learned that the devastating tide of war had swept past, at a distance, leaving these rugged vales in unassailed security; as he ascertained from the wandering hunter, or the lonely shepherd of the hills, that his adored Margaret still sat unharmed in her solitary bower, without a cause of sorrow, save the absence of her lord, he had succeeded in casting grief behind him. The free air of his native hills had dispelled the gloom, which, for many a weary month, had weighed so heav-

ily upon his soul; and, at times, a touch of that reckless gayety of mood, which had distinguished him of yore at the feast and in the fray, broke forth in snatches of some lively song, startling the moorland echoes with their unaccustomed glee. Rapidly, however, as his mind had regained its native elasticity, and loftily as his hopes had soared in their recovered confidence, yet, with tenfold rapidly, did those vain hopes sink, when his eyes beheld that strange illumination, and his unwilling ears admitted those ill-timed sounds of glee. It was not, however, with the poignant acuteness of an unexpected blow, but rather with the stern and gloomy bitterness of a long-foreseen calamity, that this new certainty of evil smote upon his senses. Evil it must be! For how should she, on whose affections he had staked his all, give loose to merriment, while her wedded lord was languishing in a dark and silent dungeon? How should she find pleasure in the dance, or lend her soul to the voluptuous strains of the minstrel, unless another tale of fickleness and falsehood were to be added to the gloomy annals of human sin and misery? An overwhelming rush of dark and terrible thoughts burst instantaneously upon his mind. Love—jealousy—revenge, burning almost to frenzy, were mingled with despondency, and doubt, and terror! Yet, to the honor of his noble nature be it spoken, the struggle lasted but for one instant! The untainted purity, the sweet humility, the hallowed devotion of his bride rose on his softened memory, and swept each dark suspicion from his soul, almost before it had found birth—but, with repentance for his momentary distrust of her, whom he now felt to be far, far above the slightest taint of calumny or doubt, his fears increased to such a point, that the bold warrior trembled in his saddle like a weakly child, and his steel harness clattered on his limbs convulsed as by an ague. Then, as his dread became more definite, he gored his weary charger with the spur,

whirled his tremendous weapon from scabbard, and, with his battle-cry, a "Hamilton to the rescue!" quivering on his lips, ere a second had elapsed, he was driving along the broken road at a pace, which, from the previous exhaustion of both horse and rider, would have been deemed beyond the bounds of nature. Hill and hollow, rock and wood, just glanced, like meteors, on his view, and were swallowed up in distance, as he rushed along. A short half mile was yet between him and the solution of his hopes or fears. The path, which had hitherto swept along the northern margin of the Eske, now turned abruptly to the right, and, diving precipitously into the dell, crossed the channel of the torrent by a ford, so dangerous at periods from the rapid floods, which come down from the moorlands after every summer's shower, and every winter's storm, that a high and narrow bridge of planks had been thrown across the chasm for the benefit of the timid or infirm. No parapet or rail defended the sides of this perilous causeway, though, scarcely a yard in breadth, it was reared high above the slaty bed, supported partially by piers of rugged masonry, and partially by blocks of the living rock, through which the everlasting stream had cleft itself a passage. At a single glance the borderer perceived, from the brawling fury with which the turbid spray was hurled against the creaking arches, that death must be the inevitable lot of any who should brave the swollen ford. Without a pause, however, he drove his steed, by dint of spur and tightened rein, across the clattering planks. The hand of Providence was there! For, had the charger's foot diverged one inch's breadth from its direction, both horse and man had perished; the smallest swerve, the slightest stumble, must have hurled them headlong to destruction. Once only did his hoofs clash on the echoing timber, a second stride, and the firm rock rang beneath him. But scarcely had he cleared the bridge, before the horse swung

round, in mortal terror, as it were, of some aërial shape beheld by him alone, with a violence that might well have cast a less-experienced rider from his seat, ere he had discovered the cause of his disaster. As it was, although with every advantage of support from the steady hand and practised skill of the cavalier, the over-driven beast staggered a pace or two, then, with a heavy, though fruitless effort at recovery, fell, rolled over and over, never to rise, and, ere its master had regained his footing, had stretched out all its limbs in the rigidity of death.

Shaken as he was by the sudden shock, Hamilton had sprung up, sword in hand, even with the speed of light; the idea of an ambush flashed upon his senses as he fell, and he arose prepared for deadly strife. But the brandished blade sank powerless, and the half-uttered shout was smothered in a prayer, as he beheld a tall and shadowy figure, white as the drifted snow, its long, loose tresses floating on the wind, and its pale lips uttering strange sounds of thrilling laughter. Erect upon the last abutment of the bridge, the form, whatever it might be, though it had escaped the notice of the rider, occupied by the urgency of his position, had startled the horse almost into the jaws of death, and, for a moment, as the soldier gazed upon the apparition, the life-blood curdled at his heart. Fearlessly, joyously, would he have plunged into the mortal conflict; but thus arrayed against the powers of another world, confirmed as such visions were in that dark age, even by the doctrines of his church, what wonder that the boldest spirit should shrink back from the unequal contest? Not long, however, could fear, even of a supernatural caste, appal a mind so resolute at all times, and now so wrought to desperation, as that of Hamilton. “*Maria sanctissima*,” he muttered — “*ora pro nobis!* Our border tales are true; it is the spirit of the stormy water! But there is that within my soul to-

night that I must on, though the arch-fiend himself should strive to bar my passage." Grasping his ponderous weapon, he strode forward, as if to meet an earthly foeman, calmly resolved to prove his might against the terrors of a world invisible. "In the name of him," he whispered through his hard-clenched teeth, "of whose most holy death thou hast no portion, hence to thine-appointed place!" The shriek, which burst from the ghastly form to whom he spake, might well have raised the dead, if aught of earth had power to rend their cerements, so high, so spiritually-piercing were its tones. It ended, and a burst of horrid laughter rang upon the night-air, and then the piteous wailing of unspeakable despair. The moon, which had again been hidden for a while, now streamed forth gloriously from a chasm in the rolling vapors, so suddenly and so splendidly did the bright rays illuminate that pallid shape, that, for an instant, he believed the light an emanation from the form itself; but, in that instant, he recognised the delicate and graceful limbs, the features lovely, despite their livid paleness, of his own Margaret. Not a shade of color varied the dead whiteness of her cheek or lip—not a spark of intelligence gleamed from those eyes, once the sources of unutterable love and lustre. The superb figure scarcely veiled by one thin robe of linen—the bosom, pulseless as it seemed, to which was clasped a naked, new-born babe—even the tones of her voice, altered as they were and terrible, were all his Margaret's. Not a doubt existed in his mind but that the spirit of his wife stood thus revealed before him; and, as the conviction became strong, fear departed. Grief, deep grief, was visible upon his brow; but grief exalted, as it were, and purified by communion with the sainted and imperishable part of one, who, even while loaded with the imperfections of the mortal clay, had ever seemed a being allied to heaven, more nearly than to earth.

Casting his sword far from him, he sank silently upon his knees beside the stiffening carcase of his charger; with arms outstretched, extended neck, and parted lips, he paused in breathless expectation. Folding the infant closer to her cold embrace, as though no mortal eye beheld, or ear attended, she warbled, in a voice of surpassing sweetness, one of the most pathetic ballads of her tuneful country :—

* * * * *

“Balow,* she sang, my waesome babe,
Lye still, for luve o’ me!
Though mirk† the night, and keen the blast,
My breast sall cherish thee.

“Balow, she sang, though friends are fause,
And foes do harry me,
Lye still, my babe—my winsome babe—
Or I sall surely dee.

“The castle-hearth is cauld, my child,
Toom‡ is the castle ha’—
Our hame is in the muirland wild,
Our bed i’ the drifted snaw.

“Thy father’s wandering far awa,
Thy mither’s like to dee,
Thy gudesire’s in the auld kirk garth,
And there’s nane to succor thee.

“And never, never mair, my babe,
Shall we twa link thegither,
When leaves are green, and lavrocks§ sing,
I’ the blithesome simmer weather.

“When leaves are green, and lavrocks sing,
On ilka broomy knowe,||
Then thou salt sport, my darling doo,¶
But I’ll be cauld, and low.

“But yet—she sang—balow my babe,
Lye still for luve o’ me,
Lye still, my babe, my winsome babe,
Or I sall surely dee.”

* *Balow*, lullaby. † *Mirk*, dark. ‡ *Toom*, empty. § *Lavrock*, skylark. -
|| *Knowe*, knoll, hillock. ¶ *Doo*, dove.

As her plaintive song ended, she flung an arm aloft with a wild expression of terror, "Help! help!" she screamed; "to arms! the foe! save—save me, Hamilton!—my lord, my life, preserve me! O God! O God, is there no help from earth, or heaven? Unhand me, villains! dearly shall ye rue this night when Hamilton returns. Give me my child—my blessed boy. Oh! mercy, mercy!"—Like a thunderbolt the truth smote on his soul. It was his wife—his living wife—driven forth into the snowy fields to perish with her babe. At a single bound he stood beside her; madly he cast his arms around her icy form—"Margaret," he sobbed upon her bosom; "my own—own Margaret, thy Hamilton is here." "Villain," she shrieked; "thou Hamilton! avaunt! I know thee not! would—would to God, my princely Hamilton were here; but his glorious form I never shall behold again! But, see!" she cried, "if thou hast yet a spark of mercy in thine iron heart, receive and bear mine infant to his father's arms; behold;" she moved the little body from her shivering breast, gazed wistfully upon its shrunken features, and then, as the fatal truth became apparent, "Cold—cold! oh! merciful Heaven!" she faltered forth in calmer tones, and sank from her husband's grasp upon the chilly soil. It was in vain that her half-frenzied lord stripped his own frame of garment after garment to fence her from the piercing storm; it was in vain that he chafed her frozen limbs, and strove to wake her into life by his warm breath; long did she lie sobbing and trembling as though her heart would leap from its place, but not a symptom of returning animation blessed his hopes; gradually she was sinking into that sleep which knows no waking; pain and grief were nearly over, and it seemed as if she were about to pass, without another struggle, into the presence of her Creator. Suddenly she rallied; her long-fringed lashes rose, and, as she turned her eyes upon her husband's face, he saw, with

momentary rapture, that the wild glare of insanity had faded from those liquid orbs, and that she knew him. "Was it a dream?" she said; "O Hamilton, beloved husband, it is indeed thus that we have met; met only to be parted for ever! My babe, my blessed babe has gone before me. I saw his little limbs convulsed with the last agony of cold, I felt the last flutter of his balmy breath upon my lips, and then my reason fled! But blessed be the Virgin, I have seen, and known my lord." Her words came forth more slowly, and, at every pause, that dread forerunner of dissolution, the death-rattle, was distinctly audible. "Fly, fly from this accursed spot. Promise—that you will fly to save your precious life! Oh! Hamilton—I am going—kiss me yet once again—bless you, my husband—the ho—ly Virgin bless you—husband—husband!"

PART II.

I gazed upon him where he lay,
And watched his spirit ebb away
Though pierced like pard by hunter's steel,
He felt not half that now I feel.
I searched, but vainly searched, to find
The workings of a wounded mind;
Each feature of that sullen corse
Betrayed his rage but no remorse.
Oh, what had vengeance given to trace
Despair upon his dying face. — BYRON.

THE severity of winter had already begun to relax, although the season of its endurance had not yet passed away; for, as it not unfrequently happens, the unwonted rigor, which had characterized the last months of 1568, was succeeded by a scarcely less unusual mildness in the commencement of the following year. The air was mild, and, for the most part, southerly; and the continuance of soft and misty weather had clothed the meadows with a premature and transitory verdure. The young grass pushed forth its tender blades from the mound which covered all that earth might claim of the hapless wife of Hamilton, the small birds chirped above her silent home, and in the vales which she had gladdened by her presence, it seemed as though her gentle virtues were forgotten almost before her limbs had perished in their untimely sepulchre. One heart, however, there still beat, that never would forget; one heart that would have deemed forgetfulness the deepest curse it could be made to feel, although the gift of memory was but the source of unavailing sorrow and despair.

Experience has fully shown that to no frame of mind is grief more poignantly acute than to such as having been fashioned by nature in a stern and rugged mould, averse to sympathy, and hardly susceptible of any tender emotion have, by some fortuitous circumstances, and in some unguarded hour, been surrendered to the dominion of one master passion, which has worked, in time, an entire revulsion of their feelings, and changed the very aim of their existence. Such had been the fate of Bothwelhaugh; restless, fierce, and ambitious, as he has been pictured in his unbridled youth; accustomed to speak and think of women with license and contempt, he had been affected by the sweetness and pure love of his young bride to a degree, which souls like his alone are able to conceive; and when deprived of her in a manner so fearfully horrible, and with details so aggravating, the effects produced on his demeanor were proportioned only to the event which gave them birth.

No sudden burst of violence, no fierce display of temper, such as, in his days of unrestrained indulgence, he hath been wont to show at the loss of a favorite falcon, or a faithful hound, followed upon this his first true cause for sorrow. Not a tear moistened his burning eyeballs, not a sob relieved the choking of his throat, as he followed his first and only love to her eternal home; a heavy stupor was upon him; he moved, spoke, and acted as if by instinct, rather than by volition; and there were those who deemed that his brain had received a shock that would paralyze its faculties for ever, and that the high-souled and sagacious Hamilton was henceforth to be rated as a moody, moping idiot. Not long, however, did this unusual temper continue; for scarcely had he seen the last remains of the only being he had ever loved committed to earth, ere, to the eye of a superficial observer, he appeared solely occupied in the management of his departure from the patrimony

of his immemorial ancestors ; few, indeed, and brief were his preparations ; a charger of matchless strength and symmetry, was easily provided on that warlike frontier to supply the place of that which had borne him on his fatal journey ; his arms were carefully inspected, the rust wiped from his two-handed blade, and the powder freshened in his clumsy, but effective, firearms ; and, lastly, a dozen of the hardiest riders of the border side had preferred the fortunes of their natural chief, although his star was overcast, to the usurped dominions of him who, by the haughty regent's favor, possessed the confiscated demesnes of a better and braver man. Mounted on horses famed for their hardiness and speed, and trained to all the varied purposes of war ; their bright and soldier-like accoutrements contrasting strangely with the wild expression of their features, their untrimmed beards, and shaggy locks, the small band, as they leaned on their long lances, or secured their slight equipments, around the solitary tower in which their leader had passed the melancholy hours of his sojourn, presented a picture of singular romance and beauty. Horses neighed and stamped in the echoing court-yard, armor clashed, and spurs jingled, and louder than all were heard the eager and excited voices of the untamed borderers ; but every sound was hushed as their stern chief came forth, surveyed the harness of every trooper, and the caparison of every steed in silence, threw himself upon his horse, and wheeled his handful of men at a hard trot upon the road toward the Scottish capital. Hardly a mile of their route had been passed, and the troop was diving into the very glen which had witnessed the downfall of Hamilton's sole earthly hope, when the vidette fell hastily back with notice of the approach of horsemen. Hurrying forward, they had already cleared the ravine, when they beheld some half score lancers winding down toward the rugged ford, the followers, it seemed, of a knight who had already

passed the river. There needed not a moment's halt to array his fresh steeds and ready warriors for the charge, if such were to be the result of the encounter. At a glance had Hamilton discovered the person of the regent's minion, the cold-blooded, relentless hater, who had wreaked his coward spite upon his unoffending, helpless wife ; nor were his followers slower in recognising the usurper of their chieftain's patrimony. With a fierce and triumphant yell, they dashed their spurs into their horses' flanks, and with levelled spears and presented match-locks, threatened inevitable destruction to the victim who was thus hopelessly surrendered to their mercy. The nearest of his train was separated from him by the wide and stony channel of the Eske, nor was it possible that he could be joined by succor in time to preserve him from the fury of those wild avengers. To the astonishment, however, of both parties, Bothwelhaugh, who had only learned the deadly intentions of his men from the hoarse clamor with which they greeted the appearance of their destined prey, himself reined up his horse with a shock so sudden that it had nearly thrown him on his haunches—"How now!" he shouted, in the short tones of resolution ; "vassals! halt, or I cleave the foremost to his teeth! Saint Mary aid us ; but we have fair discipline!" His determined words, no less than the readiness with which he had upon the instant beat down the lances of the fiercest troopers, arrested their wild violence ; and before the intended victim had prepared his mind either for resistance or submission, the peril was at an end.

Wheeling his party upon the narrow green beside the bridge, the bereaved husband halted, awaiting the approach of his wife's destroyer, with an apathy which, to the veterans who had followed him in many a bloody day, appeared no less incomprehensible than shameful ; while one by one the enemy filed through the narrow pass formed, hesitated for a space, and

then, perceiving that no opposition would be offered to their progress, marched onward with a steady front, and well-dissembled resolution. Last of the troop, with downcast eye and varying complexion, as though he scarcely dared to hope for mercy from a man whom he had so irreparably injured, rode the usurper, expecting at every step to hear the border slogan pealing from the lips, and to feel the death-blow thundering from the arm of him, to whom he had given such ample cause to curse the hour when he was born. Motionless as a statue sate the noble Hamilton on his tall war-horse, his broadsword at rest within its scabbard, and his countenance as calm, and almost as dark, as midnight;—yet, whatever were the feelings that induced the borderer to forego his vengeance, when circumstances thus wooed him to the deed, it was evident that mercy had no place within his soul at that tremendous moment. The heavy gloom that dimmed his eye—the deep scowl upon his brow—the compression of his lips—and the quivering motion of his fingers, as they hovered upon the gripe of his dagger, betokened no slight or transitory struggle; and the deep breath drawn from the bottom of the chest, as the hated minion disappeared, spoke, as plainly as words, the relief which he experienced at the removal of so powerful a temptation. “No!” he muttered between his teeth—“it would have been a deed of madness! To have crushed the jackall would but have roused the lion into caution! Let them deem me coward—slave—fool!—if they will—so *I have my revenge!*” Again he resumed his route in silence, nor did a word, save an occasional command, fall from him by which the train of his sensations might have been discovered; all day he pursued his march with unwearied diligence, barely allowing such brief intervals of rest as might enable his cattle to proceed with recruited vigor—and, while toiling through the deep morass, or over the pathless hill, night closed,

starless and overcast, above his houseless head ; but little mattered it to such men as that determined soldier and his rugged comrades, whether night found them on the lonely moor or in the lighted hall. And if they thought at all upon the subject, it was but to congratulate themselves on the fortunate obscurity which agreed so well with their mysterious enterprise.

The second moon was in her wane, from that which had beheld the death of Margaret, and her miserable babe ; yet the savage executor of her fate lorded it securely in the halls which had so lately been the dwelling of female innocence and peace. For a while men looked for a sure and speedy retribution from the fatal wrath of him who had never yet been known to fail a friend, or to forgive a foe ; yet day succeeded day, and, with the impunity of the murderer, the astonishment at first, and ere long the scorn of all, pursued the recreant husband and fugitive chief of a name once so noble. Some gray-haired veterans there were, who would ominously shake their heads, and press their fingers to the lip, when topics such as these were broached, or hint that the lord of Bothwelhaugh would bide his time, and that, if he were unaccountably slow in seeking his revenge, he paused but to mak sicker ;* generally, however, an idea prevailed that the spirit of Hamilton had been so utterly prostrated by the blow, that no gallant deed of vengeance—which was held in those days of recent barbarism, not only justifiable, but in the highest degree praiseworthy and honorable—was now to be dreaded by his foes, or hailed by his firm adherents. Little, however, did they know the man whom they presumed to stigmatize as a recreant, or a coward ; and still less could they conceive the change, which had been brought about by a single event in his formerly rash

* The celebrated words of Kirkpatrick, the companion of Robert Bruce, when he returned to complete the slaughter of Comyn, who had been stabbed at the high-altar by the patriot.

and unthinking temper. Once, not an instant would have elapsed between the commission of the crime and its punishment; once, he would have rushed upon a thousand perils to confront the man who wronged him, and would have set his life at naught in avenging his tarnished honor. Now, on the contrary, his bold and open hardihood was exchanged for a keen and subtle cunning; now he hoarded, with a miser's care that life which he had set upon a thousand times; not that he loved his life, but that he had devoted it to the attainment of one object, which had become the single aim of his existence. It was from the quiver of Murray that the arrow had been selected, which had pierced his love, and he haughtily overlooked the wretched villain, who had aimed the dart, in his anxiety to smite the mightier though remoter agent, who furnished his tool with that power which had destroyed his all.

Successful in his ambitious projects, backed by the almost omnipotent league of the covenanted lords, wielding the truncheon of the regency as firmly as though it were a royal sceptre, feared and honored by Scotland, respected by the lion-queen of England, Murray entertained no doubt, harbored no lurking dread, of a man too insignificant, as he deemed in his overweening confidence, to cope with the occupant of Scotland's throne.

Returning from an expedition through the vales of Esk and Clyde, whose romantic waters had been dyed with blood by his remorseless policy, leaving sad traces of his progress in smoking villages and ruined towers, he had reached Linlithgow on his progress toward his capital. Surrounded by a select force of the best warriors from every lowland plain or highland glen, he had entered the antique town as the last sun that was ever to set for him sank slowly into a bed of threatening clouds: and all night long the streets of Linlithgow rang with mingled sounds of war and revelry. From leagues around the

population of the country had crowded in to feast their eyes with the triumphant entry, and pay their homage to the well nigh royal conqueror; many an eye was sleepless on the memorable night, but few from sorrow or anxiety; yet there was one within the precincts of those antiquated walls, whose presence, had it been whispered in the regent's ear, would have shaken his dauntless heart with an unwonted tremor. Overlooking from its Gothic bartizan, the market-place of the old city, stood one of those gloomy dwellings, with its turretted gable to the street, its oaken portal clenched with many a massive spike and bar, and its narrow casements subdivided by stone transoms, which are yet to be seen in several of the Scottish boroughs, presenting evident traces of having been erected in that iron time, when every man's house was in truth his castle. Here, in a narrow gallery which commanded the principal thoroughfare, without a light to cheer his solitude, or fire to warm his limbs, watched the avenger. The night was raw and gusty, yet he felt not the penetrating breath of winter; he had ridden many a weary mile, yet his eyelids felt no inclination to slumber; he had fasted since the preceding night, yet he knew no hunger; he stood upon the brink of murder, yet he shuddered not. Before the sun had set, he had despatched his last attendant to the castle of his princely kinsman the duke, who bore his name, and owned his fealty; he had supplied his charger with the grain which was to serve him for to-morrow's race, in one of the lower halls of the deserted house; he had barricaded every portal with unwonted deliberation, and secured the windows with chain and bar; he had prepared all that was needful for the tragedy he was about to perpetrate, and now he was alone with his conscience and his God!

His mind, wrought to the highest pitch of resolution, dreamed not of compunction, nor did he for an instant doubt

his full justification in the eyes of his Creator, although he was lying in wait secretly to mark a fellow-being, as though he were a beast of the chase. Nor indeed did he feel so much of hesitation in leveling his rifle* at his brother man, as he had often experienced in striking down the antlered monarch of the waste. Oftentimes, when the beautiful deer had been stretched at his feet by his unerring aim, with its graceful limbs unstrung for ever, and its noble crest grovelling in the dust, had he sorrowed in secret over the destruction he had wrought for momentary pleasure; but no such thoughts were here to meet his resolution, or to damp his anticipated triumph. As he paced on his short beat with firm and measured stride, he reckoned the minutes with trembling anxiety, and as the successive hours clanged from the lofty steeple, he cursed the space that yet divided him from his revenge; still, amidst all his eagerness, he had the strength of mind to banish from his thoughts all recollections of the grievance, which he never recurred to but he felt his brain reel, and his nerves tremble with fury, which he could neither guide nor moderate. Night, however, though it may be tedious even to disgust, can not endure for ever; and, in due time, the misty light of dawn glimmered through the narrow panes upon the scene of fatal preparation. The wall facing the window, hung from the

* "The carabine with which the regent was shot, is still preserved at Hamilton palace, it is a brass piece of middling length, very small in the bore; and, what is rather extraordinary, appears to have been rifled, or indented in the barrel. It had a matchlock, for which a modern firelock has been injudiciously substituted."—*Sir Walter Scott*.

We believe this to be the earliest rifle on record; in many superb collections of armor which it has been our fortune to inspect, we have seen fire-arms of all dates and countries, but have never seen a rifle bearing an earlier date than the end of the 17th, or commencement of the 18th century; yet the death of the regent occurred in January, 1569, at which period the harquebuss, or caliver, in common use was so unwieldy, that the use of archery had been but recently exploded.—*Ed*.

ceiling to the floor with black cloth, that no shadow might betray the lurking enemy, the piles of bedding strewed upon the floor to prevent a single footfall from awakening suspicion, and, on a table by the casement, the match-lock rifle, with its slow match already kindled, the horn and bullets ready for the hand, no less than the accoutrements and bearing of the man, proclaimed the fixed determination with which he had plotted, and the cold-blooded preparation with which he was prompt to execute his enemy's destruction.

As the morning broke, a wild flourish of trumpets sounded the reveille from a distant quarter of the town, wherein his victim had passed the hours of sleep in undisturbed tranquillity. The sound fell upon the ear of Hamilton, and, thrilling to his heart's core, stirred him like the horse of Job. Again he applied himself to his task ; again he reconnoitred every outlet to the main street, and made assurance doubly sure that, for ten minutes, at the least, the fastenings could resist any assaults short of the shot of ordnance ; he equipped his charger with the lightest trappings, tried every buckle, and proved the least important thong ; then, as the time drew nigh, led him forth silently to the rear of the building, whence a gloomy and neglected garden conducted to an unfrequented lane, by which he might gain access to the open country. Still, when all this was finished, when the preparations were concluded, and his escape provided to the utmost that human foresight could effect, a tedious hour had yet to creep away before the success of his machinations should be ascertained. Cautiously he retraced his steps, and entering once more upon the scene of action, prepared his weapon for the deed with scrupulous attention ; the first smile that had lightened his gloomy brow now flashed across it as he drove the leaden messenger down the tube, from which it was soon to be launched on its career of blood ; and raising the well-proved instrument to his un-

erring eye, examined with a markman's skill its range and balance. Then coolly, as though he were about to provide himself against the inconveniences of a protracted chase, drawing from a recess food and wine, he broke bread and drank, not without satisfaction.

Hardly had he finished his slender meal before the distant chime of the matin bells, proclaiming the earliest service of the church, tinkled upon the breeze. Reverently, devoutly did the future murderer sink upon his knees, and fervently did he implore the aid of that Being, who, if it be not impious to imagine the ideas of Divinity, must have looked down with abhorrence on the supplication of one who was even then plotting a deed of blood, unless the ignorance and barbarism of the age might pass for some alleviation of individual error in the sight of Him who is no less a God of mercy than of justice and of truth. Strengthened in his awful purpose, and confident of both the goodness and the approaching triumph of his cause, Hamilton rose up from his ill-judged devotions. Suddenly the roar of artillery shook the casements, and the din of martial music, trumpet, horn, and kettle-drum, mingling in wild discordance with the pibrochs of the highland clans, announced that the regent had commenced his progress.

At once every symptom of anxiety or eagerness disappeared from the lowering countenance of Hamilton; while there had been uncertainty, the slightest possible shade of trepidation had appeared in his demeanor; but now, as in the warlike symphony, and the acclamations of the populace, he foresaw the success of all his desperate machinations, he was calm and self-possessed; now, when a meaner spirit would have shrunk from the completion of the deed, which it had dared to plan, but lacked the resolution to perform, the full extent of his determination was most manifest. There was a quiet composure in his eye, a serene complacency in the repose of

every feature, which, as considered in connection with his dreadful purpose, was more appalling, than the fiercest burst of passion. Firm as a statue he stood in the dark embrasure, the ready weapon in his hand, and his keen glance watching the approach of his doomed victim. Louder and louder swelled the notes of triumph; and now the very words of the applauding concourse became audible: "God save the regent!" "Life to the noble Murray!" Then a score of lancers lightly equipped, and nobly mounted, clattered along the echoing street to clear a path for the procession; but their efforts were exerted to no purpose, the populace, which thronged the area of the place closed in behind the soldiers, as waves uniting in the wake of some swift sailer, and, in their eagerness to prove the extent of their good wishes, frustrated their own intent, and rendered their favorite's doom more certain. Banner after banner, troop after troop, swept onward! Glittering in all the gorgeousness of steel and scarlet, marshalled by men whose fame for warlike science and undaunted bravery might have challenged the glory of earth's most widely-bruited heroes, elated with recent victory, and proud of the unconquered leader whom they guarded, they trampled on, "defying earth and confident of heaven." Morton was there, with his sneering smile and downcast eye, as when he struck his poniard into the heart of Rizzio; and Lindsay, of the Byres, sordid in his antiquated garb and rusty armor, with the hardest heart beneath his iron corslet that ever beat in a human breast; and Kircaldy, of the Grange, the best and bravest soldier of the age; and the celebrated Knox, riding in his clerical garb amidst the spears—Knox, of whom it was justly spoken after his decease, that he had never feared the face of man! and the chief of the Macfarlanes with his shadowy tartans, and the eagle-feather in his bonnet, and a thousand kilted caterans at his heels! But proudly as the marshalled ranks proceeded on their march, and haughty

as was the bearing of the crested warriors, there was not a man in all the train that could compare in thewes and sinews with him who watched within. His closely-fitting dress of chamois leather, displaying the faultless proportions of his limbs, the elasticity of his tread, the majestic melancholy of his expression, gained by the contrast, when viewed beside the pomp and splendor of his haughty foemen. Another troop of lancers striving in vain to remove the crowded spectators from the route; and then, preceded by heralds in their quartered tabards, amid the clang of instruments, and the redoubled clamors of the multitude, on a gray, which had been cheaply purchased at the price of an earl's ransom, sheathed from head to heel in the tempered steel of Milan, Murray came forth, in all but name a king. So closely did the crowd press forward, that the chargers of the knights could barely move at a foot's pace. Glencairn was at his right, and on his left, the truest of his followers, Douglas of Parkhead.

The pomp had passed unnoticed; the well-known figures had gleamed before the eyes of Hamilton, like phantoms in a troubled dream; but no sooner had his victim met his eye, than the ready rifle was at his shoulder. The regent's face was turned toward his murderer, and full at the broad brow did the avenger point the tube. The match was kindled, the finger pressed the trigger, when, at a word from Douglas, he turned his head; the massive *cerveilliere* would have defied a hail of bullets, and the moment for the deed was lost. Without a moment's pause, without removing the weapon from his eye, or his eye from the living mark, he suffered the muzzle to sink slowly down the line of Murray's person. Just below the hip, where the rim of the corslet should have lapped over the jointed cuishes, there was one spot at which the crimson velvet of his under-garb glared through a crevice in the plates, — a French crown would have guarded twice the space, yet

on that trifling aperture the deadly aim was fixed. A broad flash was thrown upon the faces of the group, and ere the sound had followed the streak of flame, the gray dashed madly forward, with empty saddle, and unmastered rein. The conqueror had fallen in the very flush of his pride; and, at the first glance, it seemed, he had not fallen singly, for so true had been the aim, and so resistless the passage of the bullet, that, after piercing through his vitals, it had power to rend the steel asunder, and slay the horse of Douglas. For a moment there was a silence—a short, breathless pause—the gathering of the tempest!—a yell of execration and revenge, and a hundred axes thundered on the steel-clenched portal.

One instant the avenger leaned forth from the casement in the full view of all, to mark the death-pang of his prey. He saw the life-blood welling from the wound, he saw the death-sweat clogging his darkened brow, he saw the bright eye glaze, and the proud lip curl in the agony—but he saw not, what he had longed to trace—remorse—terror at quitting earth—despair of gaining heaven! He turned away in deeper torment than the dying mortal at his feet, for he felt that all his wrongs were now but half avenged! The presence of the murderer lent double vigor to the arms of his pursuers—a dozen flashes of musketry from the crowd glanced on his sight—a dozen bullets whistled round his head—but he bore a charmed life. The gate shook, crashed beneath the force of the assailants—fell, as he sprang into the saddle! He locked the sally-port behind him, darted through the lonely garden, gained the lane, and saw the broad free moors before him. But, as he cleared the court, a score of light-armed horsemen wheeled round the corner of the building, dashed their horses to their speed, and, with tremendous shouts, galloped recklessly in the pursuit. It was a fearful race, the broken pavement of the lane presented no obstacle to their precipitate haste;

pursuers and pursued plied spur and scourge with desperate eagerness, and, for a space, a lance's length was hardly clear between the fugitive and the half-frantic soldiery; but gradually the lighter equipments, and the fresher steed of Hamilton, began to tell. He had already gained a hundred yards, and, at every stride, was leaving his enemies yet further in the rear; there were no fire-arms among the knot, who pressed most closely on his traces, and he would now have gained the open country, and have escaped without a further struggle; but, as he cleared the straggling buildings of the suburb, a fresh relay of troopers met him in the front, headed by Lindsay, Morton, and Glencairn. Had they been ten yards further in advance, the life of Bothwelhaugh would not have been worth a moment's purchase—but he had yet a chance. On the left hand of the road lay a wide range of moorland pastures, stretching downward to a deep and sluggish brook, beyond which the land extended in waste and forest far away to the demesnes of James of Arran, duke of Chatelherault and Hamilton. A six-foot wall, of unhewn limestone, parted the grass-land from the highway, and, without a pause, he turned his horse's head straight to the lofty barrier. At the top of his pace, the steed drove on—a steady pull upon the rein, a sharp plunge of the spurs, and, with a fearful bound, he got clear over;—but, with equal resolution did the confederate lords pursue—Lindsay was still the foremost, and three others thundered close behind! Another, and another of these huge fences crossed their line, but not a rider faltered, not a horse fell. The price of the chase was fearful—the pace, at which it was maintained, was too exhausting for both man and beast to be supported long, and, obviously, the chances of the fugitive were fast diminishing. Another wall—another successful leap—Lindsay is down, but Morton takes his place—the bottom of the hill is gained, and the winding streamlet lies

before them, deep and unfordable, its rugged banks rising precipitously from the water's edge, and beyond it the tangled shelter of the forest. Already the pursuers considered their success as certain—already the shout of triumph was bursting from their lips, and the avenging blades unsheathed. Bothwelhaugh saw that his case was well-nigh hopeless, yet he urged his horse against the yawning brook; but the good steed, jaded by his exertions, and cowed by the brightness of the water, shyed wildly from the leap, and stopped short, trembling in every joint. Calmly the soldier tightened his rein, breathed the exhausted animal ten seconds' space, and, drawing his light hunting-sword, rode slowly back, as if to face his enemies. The cry of exultation, which was raised by all who saw him turn to bay, was heard distinctly at Linlithgow, and every one, who heard it, deemed the murderer's head secure. Morton and Glencairn strove hard for the honor of striking down the slayer of their friend—but, when within a horse's length, Hamilton turned once again, pulled hard upon his curb, stood in his stirrups, and, as he reached the brink, brought down his naked hanger edgewise on the courser's croup. The terrified brute sprang wildly forward, cleared the tremendous chasm, and would have fallen on the other verge but for the powerful hand of the rider. With a startling shout of exultation, he shook his arm aloft, scowled on his baffled enemies, and was lost to their sight amid the leafless thickets!

PART III.

* * Fare thee well, lord ;
I would not be the villain that thou thinkest,
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich east to boot.—*Macbeth*, Act IV., Scene 3.

THE sun was setting after a lovely day in August, and his rays still gilded the broad mirror of the Seine, and the rich scenery of Paris—palaces, towers, and domes, with crowded streets, and shadowy groves between—reposing in the mellow light; while the heat, which had been so oppressive in the earlier hours, was now tempered by a soft breeze from the west. Tranquil, however, as that picture showed when viewed from a distance, there was little of tranquillity in aught beyond the view; the bells from a hundred steeples were ringing out their liveliest tones of joy, banners and pennons of many colors flaunted from every pinnacle, while ever and anon the heavy roar of cannon was mingled with the acclamations of the countless multitude. Every window was thronged with joyous faces, every place and thoroughfare swarmed with the collected population of that mighty city, all, as it seemed, partaking of one common happiness, and glowing with mutual benevolence. Here swept along a procession of capuchins in their snowy robes, with pix and chalice, banner and crucifix, censers steaming with perfumes, and manly voices swelling in religious symphony; here some proud count of Romish faith, descended from his warhorse, and bent his lofty crest to the very dust in adoration of the elevated host; and here some no

less noble Huguenot passed on in calm indifference, without exciting either wonder, as it would appear, or anger by his inattention to the holiest ceremonial of the church. Minstrels and *jongleurs* with rote and viol, professors of the *gai science* in every different tongue, and with almost every instrument, were mingled with peasant-maidens in their variegated garbs and wooden shoes, and *condottieri* sheathed in steel. Fair dames and gallant knights of high descent jostled, forgetful of their proud distinctions, with the despised plebeians whose hearts yet beat as lightly beneath their humble garments, as if they throbbed under robes of ermine, and embroideries of gold. At this delicious hour, and contemplating this moving picture, two persons stood, shrouded from public view by the rich draperies of the window, in a projecting oriel of the royal residence—a youth, whose unmuscular limbs and beardless cheek proclaimed his tender years, although the deep lines graven on his brow by intense thought, or trenched by the fiery ploughshare of unmastered passions, belonged to a maturer age. His cloak and jerkin of Genoa velvet slashed and faced with satin, and fringed with the most costly lace of Flanders, were of the deepest sable, from which flashed forth in strong relief his knightly belt and collar of invaluable diamonds. In person, air, and garb, he was one, from whom the stranger's eye would turn in aversion, and return again to gaze, as if by some wild fascination, upon that sallow countenance and hollow eye, marked as they were by feelings most high and most unholy. Beside him stood a female of superb stature, and a form still as symmetrical as though her eighteenth summer had not yet passed away. There was a fierce and lionlike beauty in her masculine features, but that beauty was defaced and rendered horrible by the dreadful expression, which glared from her eyes, as though some demon were looking forth from the abode he had usurped within a mortal frame, of more than mortal

majesty.* Her garb was like her son's, for such was he on whom she leaned, of the deepest mourning, but gathered round her waist by a broad cincture of brilliants, from which a massive rosary of gold and gems hung nearly to the knee; her long tresses, which, though sprinkled now with many a silvery hair, might once have shamed the raven, were braided closely round her forehead and partially confined beneath a circlet of the same precious jewels. They were, in truth, a pair pre-eminently stamped by Nature's hand, and marked out, as it were, from the remainder of their species, for the performance of some strange destiny, or good or evil. Had Catharine de Medicis and her royal son been enveloped in the meanest weeds, stripped of all ensigns of their dignity, and encountered in regions most distant from their empire, they must have instantly been recognised as persons born to exalted eminence above their fellow-mortals, and singularly qualified by talents, no less powerful than perverted, for the art of government. A single gentleman, in royal liveries, attended in an antechamber on his sovereign's call, while in a gallery beyond the nodding plumes and gorgeous armor of the Italian mercenaries, who at that period were in truth the flower of all continental armies, showed that the privacy of monarchs, if splendid, was but insecure, inasmuch as their power was enthroned upon the fears rather than upon the affections of their subjects. For many moments they gazed in silence on the passing throng, but it was evident from the working of both their countenances, that their survey had for its object anything, rather than the mere gratification of curiosity. At length—as a noble-looking warrior, his venerable locks already blanched to snowy whiteness, before his nervous limbs had given a solitary token of decay, rode slowly past, attended by a brilliant train, in confident security—a scornful smile curled the dark features of the boy with even more than wonted malignity. “The simple fool!”

he whispered to his evil counsellor. "He rides as calmly through the courts of our palace, as though he marshalled his accursed heretics within his guarded leaguer!"

"Patience! my son," returned that fiendlike parent—"patience, yet for a while. A few days more and the admiral shall cumber the earth no longer. The sword is already whetted for his carcase, and would to Heaven that all our foes were tottering on the edge of the same gulf, which is prepared for thee, Gaspar de Coligni."

"I would it were over," answered Charles; "there is more of subtlety and warlike skill in that gray head, than in a hundred Condes. The day approaches—the day that must dawn upon the brightest triumph of the church; and yet so long as that man lives, nothing is certain. One doubt in that shrewd mind, and all is lost. He must be dealt upon right shortly—I would it might be done to-morrow!"

He raised his eyes half-doubtingly to the countenance of his mother, and almost started at the illumination of triumphant vengeance, which kindled in her withering smile—"To-morrow he shall perish!" she hissed, in the suppressed tones of deadly hatred and unalterable resolution—"What, ho! who waits there?" she continued, as her quick eye caught a glimpse of a passing figure in the crowd—To-morrow he shall perish, and there stands the man who must perform the deed! God's head! must I call twice! without there!" and in the furious anxiety of the moment, she stamped her heel upon the tessellated floor till the very casements shook. Startled by her vehemence, the page drew near on bended knee, and was faltering forth apologies, when with a voice of thunder she cut him short—"Nearer! thou dolt—nearer I say—wilt pause till 'tis too late! Look forth here! seest thou yon tall swordsmen!—him with the velvet bonnet and St. Andrew's cross?—Thou dost?—After him with the speed of light!—say to

him what thou wilt, so thou sayst not I sent thee, but bring him to his majesty's apartment, so soon as night shall have well fallen!—Hence, begone!—Cover thy liveries with a simple riding-cloak, and away!—Why dost thou pause? Begone—nay, hold! if he should doubt, or fear, say to him as a token, ‘The sword is the most certain spur!’”

The man, whose form had thus attracted the notice of Catharine, might well have drawn attention by his magnificent proportions alone, even had his habit been less at variance, than it was, with the established fashion of the country. A plain bonnet of dark velvet, with the silver cross of Scotland, and a single eagle's feather, drawn forward almost to his eyebrows, a corslet of steel, burnished till it shone as brightly as silver, worn above a dress of chamois-leather exquisitely dressed, and fitting with unusual closeness to his limbs, offered a singular contrast, from its plainness and total want of ornament, to the gorgeous garments of the French cavaliers fluttering with fringes, and slashed with a dozen different colors, besides the laces and embroidery of gold or silver, which were, at that period, the prevailing order of the day. Still more widely did the old-fashioned broadsword of the stranger, with its blade four feet in length, and its two-handed gripe, differ from the diamond-hilted rapiers of the Parisian gallants;—and most of all did the stern and melancholy air of the noble Scot—for such did his bearing and his dress proclaim him—distinguish him from the joyous, and, at times, frivolous mirth of the gay youths, who crossed his path at every step. Nor did his appearance fail to attract comments, not of the most flattering description, from the French chivalry, who, renowned as they most justly were, for skill in the tilt-yard, and valor in the field, had, even at distant era, acquired the character of coxcombry and over-attention to externals, which is by some supposed to have descended to the present generation. It is probable that it was

owing in no slight degree, to the muscular form and determined port of the soldier, that these comments did not assume a more offensive shape ; yet, even thus, they had nearly kindled the ire of the formidable individual to whom they bore reference. —“Heavens ! what a wild barbarian !” lisped a fair girl to the splendidly-dressed cavalier on whom she leaned. “A Scottish highlander, I fancy,” returned the gallant, after a contemptuous glance, “with his broadsword of the twelfth century, and his foreign gait and swagger.” The blood rushed furiously into the weather-beaten cheeks of the proud foreigner, and for a second he doubted whether he should not hurl defiance into the teeth of the audacious jester, but, with the reflection of a moment, his better sense prevailed. Twirling his mustache with a grim and scornful smile, he passed upon his way, shouldering the press before him, as he muttered, “The painted popinjays, they neither know the weapons of men, nor the courtesy of cavaliers !” It was at this moment that the emissary of the queen, who had easily tracked a figure so remarkable as his of whom he was in quest, overtook and brushed him somewhat roughly on the elbow as he passed. “Follow,” he said ; “follow me, if you have the heart of a man.” When first he had felt the touch, yet boiling with indignation at the treatment he had experienced, he had half unsheathed his poniard ; but having received, as he imagined in the words which followed, an invitation to a proper spot for appealing to the sword, he strode onward in the wake of his challenger, silent and determined. A few steps brought them to a narrow alley, into which his guide plunged, turning his head to mark whether he was followed as he wished ; and, after threading one or two intricate and unfrequented streets, they turned into the royal gardens, which, now so famous, even then were decorated with no common skill. “This spot, at length, will suit us,” said the Frenchman. “Monsieur is, undoubtedly, a man of honor ?”

"You should have learned my quality," replied the haughty Scot, "before you dared to offer me an insult. Draw, sir, we are here to fight, and not to parley!"

"Not so, beau sire," returned the other, not a little annoyed as it would seem, at the unexpected turn which the affair had taken; "I am the bearer of a message to you—a message from a lady, not a cartel!"

"Now out upon thee for a pitiful pandar," said the Scot, with increased ire; "dost thou take me for a boy to be cheated with such toys as these? Out with your weapon, before I compel you to it by the hard word, and the harder blow!"

"May all the saints forefend!" replied the frightened courier; "your valor, my fair sir, has flown away with your discretion. I come to you a peaceful bearer of a friendly invitation, and you will speak of naught but words. A lady of the high nobility would speak with you on matters of high import, would charge you with the execution of a perilous and honorable trust; if you will undertake it, meet me here at ten o'clock to night, and I will lead you to the rendezvous; if not, I will return to those who sent me, and report the Scottish cavalier as wanting in that high valor of which men speak, when they repeat his name!"

"It is a wild request," answered the other, after a short pause. "How know I but that you train me to some decoy? I have foes enough to make it like, I trow. What if I bring a partner?"

"It is impossible; alone you must undertake the feat, or undertake it not at all. But hold, I had a token for your ear—'The sword is the most certain spur'—know you the phrase?"

"As arguing myself, known; but whether by a friend, or by a foe, your phrase says nothing. Nay, be it as it may, I have

stood some risks before, and I will bide the blast even now !
At ten o'clock, I will be at the tryst. Till then—"

"Adieu," returned the other, and vanished among the shrubbery before the Scot could have prevented him, if he had been so minded. But such was not his intention ; his mind had been gratified by the singularity, no less than surprised by the boldness of the request. Naturally brave almost to rashness, banished from his native land for political causes, and without the means of providing for his wants, much less of supporting the appearances demanded by his rank, he eagerly looked forward to any opportunity of raising himself to distinction, perhaps, even to affluence in his adopted country ; and, with his thoughts in such a channel as this, it was not probable that a trivial or imaginary danger should deter him from an enterprise in which much might be gained ; while, on the contrary, nothing could be lost, but that which he had long ceased to value at an extravagant price, an unhappy life. The last stroke of the appointed hour was still ringing in the air, when the tall soldier stood alone at the trysting place ; his dress was in nowise altered, save by the addition of a large cloak of dark materials, worn evidently for concealment, rather than for warmth ; but, fearless as he was, he yet had taken the precaution of furnishing his belt with a pair of smaller pistols then recently introduced. Not long did he remain alone, for scarcely had he reached the spot where his mysterious guide had left him, ere he again joined him from the self-same shrubbery wherein he had then disappeared. Without a moment's delay, the messenger led him forward, with a whispered caution to say nothing, whosoever he might see ; after a few minutes walking, he reached a portal in a high and richly ornamented wall, and knocked lightly on the door, which was instantly unlatched by a sentinel whom, at first sight, the Scotsman knew for one of the chosen guards who waited round the person of

the sovereign. Sheathed in armor richly inlaid with gold, his harquebus, with its match kindled, on his arm, it would have been impossible to pass the guard without a struggle, which must have alarmed a body of his comrades who lay wrapped in their long mantles on the pavement, or played at games of chance by the pale glimmer of a single lamp; a ring, as it appeared to the silent but watchful Scot, was exhibited, and the mercenary threw his weapon forward in a low salute, and motioned them in silence to proceed. In the deepest gloom they passed through court and corridor; uninterrupted by the numerous sentinels whom they encountered, ascended winding staircases; and, without meeting a single usher or attendant in apartments of almost oriental splendor, paused at a tapestried door, which opened from the wall of a long gallery so secretly that it must have escaped the eye of the most keen observer. Here again the courtier touched, rather than struck, the panel thrice at measured intervals, and a female voice of singular and imperious depth, commanded them to enter. The brilliant glare of light which filled the small apartment had well-nigh dazzled the bewildered stranger; yet there was enough in the commanding mien of Catharine, and the youthful king who sat beside her, although no royal pomp was there, to tell him that he was in the presence of the mightiest, the most dreaded sovereigns of Europe; dropping his mantle and his bonnet to the floor, he bent his knee, and, instantly recovering his erect carriage, stood reverent but unabashed. Tempering her stern features with a smile of wonderful sweetness, and assuming an air of easy condescension, which not her niece—the lovely Mary of Scotland—could have worn with more becoming grace, the queen addressed him:—

“We have summoned to our presence, if we err not, one of the truest and most faithful servants of our well-beloved niece of Scotland. Although the queen of France has not yet recog-

nised the person, believe not, sir, that Catharine de Medicis is unacquainted with the merits of the sieur Hamilton."

Another inclination, and the color which mounted to his very brow at this most flattering, though private testimony, testified his respect and gratitude ; yet as the speech of Catharine needed no reply, though inwardly marvelling to what all this might tend, the knight of Bothwelhaugh, for he it was who stood in that high presence, saw no cause for breaking silence.

"Speak, sir," pursued the queen ; "have we been misinformed, or do we see before us the most unswerving, and the latest follower of the injured Mary ?"

"So please your grace," was Hamilton's reply ; "so long as sword was drawn, or charger spurred in my unhappy mistress' cause, so long was I in the field ! but how I can lay claim to praise as being the last, or truest of her followers, I know not. Hundreds fell at the red field of Langside, as brave and better warriors than I ; scores have since sealed their faith in blood upon the scaffold, and thousands of true hearts yet beat in Scotland ; more faithful never thrilled to the trumpet's sound ; thousands that followed her, and fought for her, that watched, and fasted, and bled for her."

"But that failed to avenge her," interrupted Catharine ; and for years afterward did those words ring in the soldier's ears with unforgotten fearfulness ; for never had he deemed such fiendish sounds of exultation could proceed from human lips, much less from woman's. "Art not thou the slayer of the base-born slave, that was the master-spirit of her enemies ? Art not thou he whose name shall go down to posterity with those of David, and of Jael, and of Judith, and of all those who have smitten the persecutors of the church of God ? Art thou not he whom princes shall delight to honor, whom the Holy Father of our faith himself hast pronounced blessed ? Art not thou the avenger of Mary, the killer of the heretic Murray ?"

"Soh! sits the wind there," thought the astonished Hamilton, as he coolly replied: "He was the enemy of my royal, my most unhappy mistress, and for that I warred with him *à l'outrance*!—the persecutor of the faithful, and for that I cursed him!—the murderer of my wife, and for that, and that alone, I slew him."

"Well didst thou do, and faithfully!" cried the queen; "adherents such as thee it is the pleasure, no less than the pride, of the house of Guise to honor and reward."

"Sieur of Hamilton," continued Charles, apt pupil of his demonical guardian, "earthly honors are but vain rewards to men like thee! Yet wear this sword as a token of gratitude due from the king of France to the avenger of his cousin; if thou art inclined to wield it in the cause of him who offers it, I hold a blank commission to a high office in our army—the command of our guard! Shall I insert the name of Hamilton!"

"Honors like these, your majesty—" he was commencing, when he was again cut short by the queen.

"Are insufficient, we are well aware, when weighed against thy merits. Accept them, notwithstanding, as an earnest of greater gifts to come. Serve but the heads of the house of Guise, as thou hast served its scions, and the truncheon of the *maréchal* hereafter may be thine. No thanks, sir! actions are the only thanks that we require! and now, farewell! we will speak further with our officer to morrow!"

Accustomed, long before, to the etiquette of courts, Hamilton received the gift upon his knee, kissed the bright blade, and with a profound inclination retreated without turning to the door, bowed a second time even lower than before, and left the presence! Scarcely, however, had he made three steps, ere he was recalled by the voice of Catharine herself. "Ha! now shall I know the price which I must pay for this rich gewgaw; methought such gilded baits must point to future

service, rather than to past good offices;" the half-formed words died on his lips as the vivid thought flashed through his brain, yet not a sound was heard; he stood in calm attention listening to the words of the tempter.

"We have bethought us, sir," said Catharine, in a low, stern whisper, "we have bethought us of a service of most high importance, wherewith it is our will that thou shouldst commence thy duties, and that, too, with the dawn! It has something of danger; but we know to whom we speak! much of honor, and therefore we rejoice in offering it to thee! If successful, to-morrow's eve shall see our champion *maréchal* of France. Dost thou accept the trust?"

"Danger, so please your highness," replied the wary soldier, "danger is the very soul of honor; and for honor alone I live. What are the commands of your majesty?"

Confident that her offer was understood and accepted, the same hateful gleam of triumph flashed across her withered features as before, and the same note of exultation marked her words. "Thou knowest, doubtless, Gaspar de Coligni—the admiral—the heretic—the sword and buckler of the accursed Huguenots!"

"As a brave soldier, and a consummate leader, I do know the man. Pity but he were faithful, as he is trusty and experienced! What is your grace's will concerning this De Coligni?"

"Qu'il meurt!"

"Give me the means to bring the matter to an issue, and I will do my devoir. But how may I find cause of quarrel with one so high as Coligni? Bring me to the admiral, and let him take every advantage of place and arms, I pledge your majesty my word, to-morrow night shall not find him among the living."

"And thinkst thou," she replied with a bitter laugh, "thinkst

thou we reckon so little of a faithful servant's safety as to expose him to a desperate conflict with a warrior such as him concerning whom we speak? As Murray fell, so fall De Coligni!"

"Not by the hand of Hamilton," was the calm, but resolute answer. "My life your majesty may command even as your own; I reckon not of it! but mine honor is in mine own keeping! Mine own private quarrel have I avenged, as best I might; but neither am I a mercenary stabber to slay men in the dark, who have done me no wrong; nor is a Scottish gentleman wont to take gold for blood-shedding. I fear me I have misapprehended the terms on which I am to serve your grace; most gladly, and most gratefully, did I receive these tokens of your majesty's approbation, as honors conferred for honorable service in the field. If, however, they were given either as a price for the blood of Murray, or as wages to be redeemed by future murder, humbly, but at the same time firmly, do I decline your bounty!"

"Why, thou most scrupulous of cut-throats!" exclaimed the youthful king, whose iron heart was utterly immovable by any touch of merciful or honorable feeling. "Dost thou, thou who didst mark thy man long months before the deed, didst dog him to destruction as your own northern hound hangs on the master-stag, didst butcher him at an unmanly vantage, dost thou pretend to round high periods about honor? Honor in a common stabber!—ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed derisively at his own false and disgraceful speech.

"It is because I am no common stabber," returned the noble Scot, "that I refuse your wages, as I loath the office, and despise the character which you would fix upon a gentleman of ancient family, and unblemished reputation! My lord, I slew yon base-born tyrant, even as I would slay your highness, should you give me cause. Had he been mine inferior, a short shrift, and a shorter cord, had paid the debt I owed him!"

mine equal, the good sword that never failed its master, had avenged her to whom alone that master's faith was plighted! He was, so word it if you will, my superior! Superior not in arms, or strength, or virtue; not in the greatness of nature's giving, but in craft, and policy, and all the pompous baubles that make fools tremble; one path was open to my vengeance, and one only! I took it! I would have taken the arch-fiend himself to be my counsellor, so he had promised vengeance! Show me the man that dares to injure Hamilton, and Hamilton will slay him: honorably, if it may be, and openly; but, in all cases, slay him. For this matter, sire, I have no license from my country to commit murders here in France; mine own just quarrel I have avenged as best I might; but not for price, or prayer, will I avenge the guard of another, be that other prince or peasant! Farewell, your highness, and when you next would buy men's blood, deal not with Scottish nobles! your grace has Spaniards and Italians enough round your person who will do your bidding, without imposing tasks on Scottish men, which it befits not them to execute, nor you to order! Has your grace any services to ask of Hamilton, which he may perform with an unsullied hand, your word shall be his law! Till then, farewell!"

He laid the jewelled sword and the broad parchment on the board, and with another inclination of respect, slowly and steadily retreated.

"Bethink thee, sir," cried the fierce queen, goaded almost to madness by the disappointment, and by the taunts of the indignant warrior, not the less galling that they were veiled beneath the thin garb of respect—"bethink thee! it is perilous, even to a proverb, to be the repository of royal secrets! how know we but thou mayest sell thine information to De Cognito?"

"In that I would not sell his blood to thee!" was the stern

answer. "If peril be incurred, 'twill not be the first time peril and I have been acquainted—nor yet, I deem, the last." Without another syllable he strode from the presence-chamber, with a louder step, and firmer port, than oft was heard or seen in those accursed walls. The usher, who had introduced him, deeming his sovereign's will completed, led him forth as he had entered, in silence, and ere the guilty pair had roused themselves from their astonishment, Hamilton was beyond the precincts of the palace. An hour had scarcely passed before the messenger was again summoned to wait the monarch's bidding. "De Crespigny," he said, "take three of the best blades of our Italian guard, dog that audacious Scot, and, be he at the board, or in the bed—at the hearth, or in the sanctuary,"—he paused, tapped the hilt of his poniard with a smile of gloomy meaning, and waved his hand toward the door—"let his head be at my feet before to-morrow's dawn, or look well to thine own!—Away!"

PART IV.

But I have none. The king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them; but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peace, confound
All unity on earth. MACBETH, Act IV., Sc. 3.

THE morning of that fatal day had arrived, the horror and atrocity of which may never be forgotten or forgiven, until the records of humanity itself shall pass away. That day, which, intended as it was by the infernal policy of France to strike a death-blow to the reformed religion throughout the world, did more to unite, to strengthen, and finally to establish the ascendancy of that religion, than could have been established by the arms of its champions, or the arguments of its professors, in centuries of unopposed prosperity; as though the fiend who suggested the counsel had deserted his pupils in very derision of their blind iniquity. Nor in truth was the hallucination of the confiding Huguenots less unaccountable than the unearthly wickedness of their opponents. It would seem that their eyes had been so completely sealed up, and their suspicions so obliterated by the marriage of the youthful monarch of Navarre with the sister of the faithless Charles, that no proof, however flagrant, of the meditated treason could awake them from their slumbers. Nor, when De Coligni was well-nigh assassinated

by the aim of an enemy,* less scrupulous than the knight of Bothwelhaugh, could they be aroused, either by the crime itself, or by the eloquence which it called forth from the Vidame of Chartres, to see in this attempt "the first act of an hideous tragedy."† Never were the extraordinary talents of the queen-mother more evident, or more successful, than in the series of intrigues, by which the protestant leaders were amused, until the scheme for their destruction was matured; and it is most remarkable that the very measures by which she lulled their fears to rest, were those which laid them most completely at the mercy of their persecutors. It was recommended by Charles that the principal gentlemen of the party should take up their quarters around the lodging of the wounded admiral, avowedly that they might be ever at hand to protect him from the machinations of his foes, but in truth that being thus collected into one body they might be butchered at ease without a hope of resistance, or a possibility of escape. A guard of honor was appointed from the musqueteers of the royal household to watch over the safety of De Coligni, but this very guard was under the command of Cosseins, his most deadly enemy; and lastly, with unparalleled baseness, Charles and his fiendish mother actually paid a visit of condolence at the bedside of the man, whom they had doomed to a miserable and disgraceful end.

All was at length prepared; the duke of Guise selected, as

* Louviers-Maurevel, who, having been educated as a page in the family of Guise, had early given indications of an evil disposition, had rendered himself infamously notorious by the murder of a courtier in revenge for some trivial punishment, and by that of the noble Mouy, governor of Niort, at the instigation, and for the wages of the catholic leaders. In consequence of this latter feat he was again employed by the same family to shoot the celebrated admiral, which deed he, however, failed to accomplish.—Mezeray, xi., 119, 209.

† Mezeray, xi. 219.

the chief most fitted for the conduct of the massacre ; the captains of the Swiss companies and the Italian condottieri were harangued and loaded with reward ; the dizeniers of the burgher guards were privately instructed to arm their men in all the quarters of the city, to assume, as distinctive ensigns, a white cross in their hats, and white scarfs on their arms, to kindle flambeaux in every window, and when the palace-clock should sound, as it was wont to do, at break of day—to fall on and leave no Huguenot alive within the walls of Paris. Nor was this all ; in every town throughout the realm, like orders had been despatched by certain hands to all the catholic governors, so that the striking of that bell in the metropolis, should be repeated from every tower in France at the same hour, a signal for simultaneous massacre, a knell for thousands and tens of thousands of her bravest and her best. One circumstance, however, had occurred, which in no slight degree embarrassed the proceedings of the royal executioners, and it needed all the influence of Catharine to hold her weaker, yet no less wicked, son firm to his resolution.

The whole day succeeding to their interview with Hamilton had been spent by that bad pair in expectation amounting almost to agony. In obedience to the mandate of his master, De Crespigny had departed with three ruffians of the guard, to seal the tongue of Bothwelhaugh for ever. The gates of Paris had been closed, and the escape of the victim seemed impossible, nor could it be imagined for a moment that one unsupported foreigner could successfully resist the arms of four assailants selected for their skill, no less than for their ferocity. Still, hour after hour crept along, and no tidings arrived of the success or failure of the enterprise, till on the very morning of the intended massacre, the stiff and mangled corpses of all the four were discovered among the shrubbery of the royal gardens, bearing fearful marks, on head and trunk, of the tre-

menhous weapon which had laid them low. That they had perished by the hand of Hamilton was evident, but to the means by which one man had defeated and slain four antagonists, each at the least his equal in strength, no clew could be discovered; nor could the most diligent inquiries throw any light upon the subsequent movements or the present residence of the victor. Indeed from the moment of his dismissal from the king's apartment, no one appeared to have seen or heard aught of an individual far too remarkable both in personal appearance and in dress to have passed unnoticed amid the idlers of the metropolis. It was, nevertheless, certain from the demeanor of De Coligni, and of his unsuspecting friends, that, hitherto at least, no discovery of their meditated destruction had occurred; and although probable that the indignant Scot, on finding himself singled out for death by his frustrated employers, should have revealed the whole conspiracy, it was yet possible that the same high-minded, though mistaken spirit, which had urged him to avenge himself on his own personal oppressor, while neither fear nor favor could induce him to play the hireling stabber's part, might now prevail on him to conceal that villany, however he might abhor and shrink from its fulfilment, which had been imparted to him beneath the seal of private confidence.

The night drew nigh, and with the darkness of the heavens a heavier gloom fell on the spirit of the king; an eager, fretful restlessness took place of his unwonted dignity—his eyes glared from their hollow sockets with a wild expression of misery; and the changing flush which now crimsoned his features, now left them as sallow as the lineaments of a corpse, gave awful tokens of a perturbed soul. Not an instant did he remain at rest, one moment flinging himself violently on a seat, then striding with unequal and agitated steps across the floor, like the chafed hyena in its den. Now swearing the annihi-

lation of the Huguenots with fearful blasphemies, now accusing his advisers, and even his dreaded mother herself of impious superstition and remorseless frenzy. "It is ye," he said, "who have driven me to this abyss of guilt! It is ye who reap the profits of the sin! but it is I, miserable I! that shall be blasted through endless ages by the hatred of men, and perhaps by the wrath of God;"—and he sunk in an agony of tears upon the couch, which rocked beneath the violence of his convulsive anguish.

"Go to!" cried Catharine with undissembled rage—"Go to! thou coward-boy, talk not to me of conscience and condemnation! Thinkest thou to hide from me who have watched it from your earliest years, the secrets of that craven heart. 'Tis not the wrath of God—'tis not the hatred of posterity that thou dost fear. Say rather that thou dost tremble at the despair of thine enemies, that thou dost shrink in terror—base terror!—from one weak, aged, wounded mortal!—Out, out upon thee, for a miserable dastard! Nay, rather out upon myself, that I have borne a coward to the house of Medicis!"

"Darest thou," shouted the boy, springing from his seat, and confronting her with equal fury—"darest thou say this to me?"

"All men will dare do so," she answered scornfully. "*All men!* God's-head, *all women,* will dare to call thee coward! will pray to the saints, in their extremity, that they may give birth to idiots, monsters, anything—but such as thee!"

"Mother," he cried, gnashing his teeth with rage, and playing with his poniard's hilt, "peace! peace! or by Him who made me, you shall rue this hour.—Tremble!"

"Coward! poltroon! wouldst thou bare thy weapon on a woman—and that woman, one who fears it less than thee!—which for thy life thou durst not handle in the presence of De Coligni. Tremble?—thinkest thou that I could tremble, if I

would ; thinkest thou that I, the destined champion of the Faith—that I, the savior of the holy Church—I, who was preordained, before mine eyes beheld the day, to quench the light of heresy in blood—that I, who, if thou darest to hesitate, will take the guidance of this matter on myself, and win that glory here, that immortality hereafter, the brilliancy of which is more resplendent than thy dazzled eyes can bear to look upon, thy vacillating mind to comprehend—that *I* know how to tremble !”

Her vehemence prevailed ! The current of his thoughts was directed into another channel, and it was now with no small difficulty that she prevailed on him to await the result of the executions in the galleries of the Louvre, rather than to sheath himself in steel, and sally forth at the head of the murderers, to prove his valor, and to glut his newly-awakened thirst for blood !—Yet, though she had thus confidently spoken of the glory, and the undoubted success of the conspiracy, in her own secret soul she shuddered !—not with fear, not with remorse, but with devouring care, with all-engrossing agitation. Every trivial sound that echoed through the royal corridors, every distant peal of voices from the street, even the stealthy footstep of the attendant-courtiers, or the sudden shutting of a door, struck on her guilty ear with a power hardly exceeded by that of the most appalling thunder. The glittering board was spread, the choicest viands served in vessels of gold, the richest vintages of Auxerre and Champagne, flowers, and fruits, and perfumes, all that could tempt the eye, or minister to the gratification of the senses, were set before the royal conclave. The goblets were filled and drained, the jest passed round, and smiles, human smiles, illuminated the features of those, who were plotting deeds worthy the arch-fiend himself. The boy-king and his brother, half-maddened by the excitement of suspense, the delirium of meditated guilt, and the fiercer stimulus of

wine, could scarce refrain from bursting into open fury; while their craftier parent, even as she yielded to the intoxication of the moment, never for an instant forgot the dreadful responsibility which claimed the fullest exercise of her keen energies; and, although she lent herself entirely to the accomplishment of her present object—the winding up of her son's vacillating courage to its utmost pitch—she had yet an ear for every remote murmur, an eye for every varying expression that might flit across the brow of page or chamberlain; an almost superhuman readiness of mind that would have defied the most critical emergency to find it unprovided with some apt expedient.

Stroke after stroke the heavy bells rang midnight, and it seemed, to each of those excited minds, as though an age elapsed between each fast-repeated clang. Another hour had yet its course to run, before those matins, whose name shall never be spoken without abhorrence, while the world endures, should sound the condemnation of a people. Another hour had yet to creep, or to career above their heads, before ten thousand sleepers should be awakened—never to sleep again! The flowers had lost their fragrance—the wine palled on their deadened palates—the lights, reflected by a hundred plates of crystal, seemed but to render darkness visible. Yet who could calmly sit and count the minutes that were to marshal in that morning of indiscriminate slaughter, who could endure to listen to the monotonous ticking of that clock, the earliest chimes of which were to be answered by the groans of dying myriads?"

"Come!" at length exclaimed the callous mother, "it is tedious tarrying here. It will be better in the tennis-court than here! Thence we can mark the progress of the execution!"—and rising from her seat, she led the way, her features dressed in smiles, and her eyes beaming with exultation, to

the hall of exercise. Few moments had elapsed before the clatter of the rackets, the lively bouncing of the balls, and the loud voices of the antagonists, announced that heart and spirit were engrossed in the excitement of the game. Oaths, shouts of laughter, proffered bets, and notes of sportive triumph, rang from the tongues, that, scarce an hour ago, had decided on the doom of the unsuspecting innocents; and that, before another should arrive, would lend their tones to swell the fearful cry of "Kill! kill!"—"Death to the Huguenots!"—"Kill and spare not!"

The noble gallery, which had been fitted, according to the fashion of the day, for the game of tennis, overlooked, with its tall netted casements, the principal street of Paris, even at that early age a wide and beautiful parade. The cool breeze from the river swept refreshingly around their feverish brows, but wafted not a sound to their ears: although they well knew that the guards must be already at their posts, crouching like tigers, that their spring might be unerringly destructive. Tranquil, however, as it appeared, the city glowed with almost noonday light, for every window was illuminated with row above row of flashing torches, and, at every angle of the streets, huge lanterns swayed to and fro in the fresh currents of the night-wind. It was a beautiful scene, but at the same time one whose beauty was of a painful and unnatural cast; every joint and moulding of the walls, nay, every crevice of the pavements, was defined, as clearly as the outlines of a Flemish picture; yet it seemed as if this unaccustomed splendor had been produced by some enchantment, and to meet no mortal end; for not a human being was to be seen throughout the whole perspective—not a houseless dog intruded on this strange solitude. At an earlier period of the night all had been dark and gloomy, even before the hum of traffic, or of pleasure, had entirely subsided; but now, when every place

was silent and deserted, unseen hands had steeped the vast metropolis in lustre, to be witnessed by no admiring multitudes. Long and wistfully did Catharine gaze upon that spectacle, straining her senses, sharpened as they were by the most fearful expectation, to catch whatever indication, sight, or sound, might offer to the success of the conspiracy. At length, as she listened, Charles—whose care-worn eye wandered ever and anon from his deep gaming to his mother's countenance—saw by the momentary shudder that thrilled her stately form, and by the rigid tension of her features, that the moment was at hand—and so in truth it was! Even when that tremor quivered through her limbs, the hammer hung suspended above the tocsin-bell. She had beheld no vision—she had heard no murmur to announce the hour—yet she knew—she felt—that, ere the breath which she was then inhaling, should go forth, the matin peal would sound. And it did sound! Heavily did the first clang of St. Germain's à l'Auxerre strike on their bursting hearts, but ere its ringing cadences had died away, another, and another, and another, took up the signal; till at every pause between their deafening clamor, the chimes of a hundred tocsins might be heard losing themselves in undistinguished distance! A single shot broke through the din of bells; with its sharp report a straggling volley followed—a long, clear, female shriek—and then the brutal riot of the savage soldiery, the shivering clash of steel, groans, prayers, and execrations, were blent in one terrific roar! If ever earthly scene might be assimilated justly to the abode of condemned sinners, and tormenting friends, Paris was such on that infernal morning. No! it is not profanity to say or to believe that disembodied demons exulted in their prison-houses, if they were not permitted to revel in the actual contemplation of Christian men converted into worse

than pagan persecutors—of the brightest city of Christendom presenting the appalling aspect of a universal hell!

“It is done,” cried Catharine, clapping her hands in furious triumph—“the Lord hath arisen and his enemies are scattered!”

“I am at length a king!” exclaimed the boy, whose fears were swallowed up in ecstasy at the accomplishment of all his machinations—“Brave Guise! noble Cosseins! Happy the monarch who can trust to servants, such as ye!”

Before the words had passed his lips, a louder, and a nearer, burst of mingled cries showed that the tide of carnage set toward the palace. Hurling his racket to the further end of the long hall, he sprang to his mother’s side, and, as he viewed the massacre of his confiding subjects, tossed his arms aloft with an expression of eye and lip that might have well beseeemed a Nero. First, a few scattered wretches rushed singly, or in groups, along the lighted streets; mothers and maids—stern men with dauntless hearts and scar-seamed brows—old grandsires with their feeble limbs and locks of snow—and infants tottering along in helpless terror! Then with a sound like that of the spring-tide, the thoroughfare was choked by thousands, frantic with despair, hurrying, they knew not whither, like sheep before their slaughterers. Behind them flashed the bloody sword of Guise and his relentless satellites; before, the gates were closed; above, around, on every side, from every roof, and every window of the illuminated dwellings, the volleyed shot hurled them in masses to destruction.

“Quick! quick! my harquebuss!” yelled the impatient Charles, maddened by the sight of blood, and thirsting like the fleshed wolf for his peculiar share. “Kill! kill!” he shouted in yet loftier tones, as the unsparing duke dashed forward, crimsoned from spur to plume with Christian blood, animating the fanatic Italians of the guard and aiding the work of slaugh-

ter, with his own polluted weapon—"Kill! kill!—gallant de Guise!—kill! and let none escape."

Before the windows of the Louvre was a narrow court, fenced from the street by a tall palisade of ornamented iron-work; hither, in the first impulse of their terrors, had a herd of wretches fled, as it were to a sanctuary in the immediate presence of their king; and here were they confined between the massive portals of the palace, and the noble thoroughfare now crowded even to suffocation by an unresisting multitude, through which the sword was slowly but implacably hewing itself a passage. Protected by the fretted railings from their foes without, they had vainly flattered themselves that they were secured from immediate violence, and trusted to the proverb, which has but too frequently been found fallacious—that "a king's face, gives grace!"—what then must have been their agony when they beheld that very countenance, to which they looked for mercy, glaring along the levelled match-lock, and felt their miserable bodies pierced by the shot at each discharge, and by the hand of their legitimate protector.

On that tremendous night, Hamilton, like a thousand others, was startled from sleep, in his secluded lodging, by the roar of musketry, and by the howls of the infuriate murderers; but, unlike the rest, he recognised at once the sequel of that relentless policy, to which he had himself refused to minister. During the very night, on which he had been admitted to the royal presence, on his return homeward through the gardens of the Louvre, he had been assaulted by the assassins, whom, from their garb and arms he at once distinguished as the agents of the king; by a pretended flight he had succeeded in avoiding their united force, and, singly overpowering each, had escaped uninjured to his dwelling. Conscious that he was singled out by a power, which it would be no easy matter to elude, and deeming that some political convulsion was at hand,

he had kept himself in total retirement, till the hue and cry should have blown over, and till some opportunity might offer for his effecting a retreat from France.

Springing from his couch at the first sounds of the massacre, he perceived at a glance that all the neighboring casements were lighted up as if for some high festival, nor could he for a moment doubt but that to be discovered unprepared would be a signal for his instant death. Few moments sufficed to kindle such a blaze as would vouch for his privity to whatever plot might be on foot, to prepare his weapons for the crisis, and to arm himself from head to heel. Ere long the tumult thickened, the same tragedy was enacted before his humble doors, that was polluting even then the threshold of the royal residence. A few shots from his window, harmlessly aimed above the heads of the poor fugitives, procured him at once the character of a zealous partisan ; when, binding the badge of white upon his arm—which he had remarked with his accustomed keenness—and fixing in his burnished morion the silver cross of his loved country, he descended, resolutely plunging through the abhorred carnage, in the hope of extricating himself, amid the general havoc, from the guilty city.

Though by no means elevated in all his thoughts above the prejudices of the age, and though himself a zealous adherent of the Romish church, his noble soul revolted from a scene so barbarous, and, as he saw at once, so horribly gratuitous. Had the destruction been confined to the leaders of the Huguenot party, nay, even to the whole of its armed supporters, it is possible that his ideas might not have soared beyond the spirit of his times ; but when he saw children unable yet to lisp their earliest words, girls in the flush of virgin loveliness, and youthful mothers with their infants at their bosom, hewn down and trampled to the earth, he shrank with inward loathing from such promiscuous slaughter, and hardly could he refrain from

starting to the rescue. Nurtured, however, as he had been, in a rude and iron country, educated in a school of warfare, injured, from his youth upward, to sights of blood, and, above all things, tutored by sad experience, in that most arduous lesson, to keep the feelings ever in subjection to the reason, he had less difficulty in resisting his desire to strike a blow in behalf of helpless innocence, than we, at this enlightened period, can imagine; and thus, occasionally lending his deep voice to swell the clamor which he hated, he strode along amid the host of persecutors, collecting, as best he might, from the disjointed exclamations of the mob, such information as might serve to extricate him from the wide charnel-house of Paris. Armed, from head to heel, in complete panoply, his unusual proportions, and lofty port, joined to the stern authority which sat upon his brow, caused him to be regarded in the light of a chieftain, among the Romish partisans. It was not, therefore, long before he ascertained that two of the city-gates had purposely been left unbarred, though circled by a chosen band of Switzers, and Italian mercenaries; and if he could succeed in making his way unscathed to either of these, he doubted not but he should be able to pass, by means of his assumed importance; and, once at large, he was resolved to make no pause until he should have crossed the sea. One difficulty alone presented itself—it would be necessary that he should traverse the esplanade before the windows of the Louvre, and beneath the very eyes of the perfidious Charles; who, if he should recognise the person of the haughty Scot, would, beyond a doubt, avenge the slight which had been offered to his royal will. Still it was his sole chance of escape; and, when life is at stake, there is no probability, however slender, to which men will not cling in their extremity.

Boldly, but at the same time cautiously, did Hamilton proceed, stifling his indignation at a thousand sights, which made

his heart's blood curdle, with necessary resolution, nor daring to extend an arm to protect the miserable beings who clung around his knees, wrestling with their cold-blooded murderers, and shrieking, in their great agony, for 'Life! life! for the love of God!' Once, as with ill-dissembled fury, he headed a band of more than common ferocity, a lovely female—her slender garments torn from her limbs by the rude soldiery, her long, fair tresses dabbled in the blood which gushed from twenty wounds—thrust her helpless babe into his arms, beseeching him with anguish, such as none but mothers feel—"If he had ever loved a woman, to save her little one!" Even as she spoke, a dark-browed Spaniard struck his stiletto into her bosom, and she fell, still shrieking as she lay beneath the trampling feet—"Save! for God's love! save my wretched child!" The monster who had felled the parent, drove the bloody weapon into the throat of the infant, and whirling the little corpse around his head, shouted the accursed war-cry—"Death! death! to the Huguenots!" It was fortunate for the noble Scott, that as he turned, the hot blood boiling to his brow with rage, to avenge the crime, an ill-directed shot from a neighboring casement, took place in the Spaniard's forehead, and, with a mingled yell of agony and triumph, he plunged headlong forward upon the bodies of his victims, a dead man, ere he touched the pavement. His whole soul sickening at the fiendish outrage, Hamilton could barely nerve himself to go another step, in such companionship; but, although he did not move a limb, the pressure of the concourse bore him onward, till almost unconsciously he found himself a witness to the scenes enacted in the court-yard of the palace.

The area of the promenade had, by this time, been cleared of living occupants through means too surely indicated by the piles of gory carcasses heaped up on every side. The men, tired of unresisting butchery, leaned listlessly on their tall

lances, unless some keener stimulus urged them to fresh exertions ; they had become epicures, as it were, in cruelty, and rarely moved from their positions, unless to commit some deed of blacker and more damnable atrocity. The king still kept his station, at the window of the tennis-court, and ever and anon, the bright flash of his harquebuss announced that he still found gratification in wanton bloodshed.

The unfortunate wretches who had rushed into the toils, while seeking for a refuge, had, for the most part, fallen victims to his deadly aim ; but a few, smarting with unnumbered wounds, and rendered sullen by despair, crouched in a corner of the small enclosure, seemingly unwilling to meet their fate, otherwise than in company ; till, pricked and goaded up by the pike of the *condottieri*, they were compelled to run the gauntlet, foaming at the mouth, like over-driven oxen, and staggering like men in the last stage of drunkenness. The red spot glowed upon the front of Bothwelhaugh, as he beheld the savage pastime ; for many hours his choler had been accumulating, and it was now fast verging to the point, at which it must find vent, or suffocate him. He saw a fair child borne in the arms of a brawny butcher of the suburbs, smiling up into the face and twining its tiny fingers among the clotted mustaches of its unmoved tormentor ;—he saw it torn from its hold, impaled upon a lance, and held aloft, a target for the monarch's practice. He saw De Guise, the arch-mover of the mischief, descend from his charger, and coolly wipe the visage of the slaughtered Coligni, with his own kerchief, to ascertain the identity of the lifeless clay. He saw a band of little children, dragging an infant Huguenot along, laughing and crowing at its youthful executioners, to plunge the cradled babe in the dark eddies of the Seine. He felt that he could endure this no longer—he felt that he must proclaim his hatred and abhorrence, or expire in the effort of repressing

them; and all that he now desired, was an opportunity of dying with éclat, and of involving in his own destruction the author of so many horrors. At the very moment when these fiery thoughts were working in his brain, an object met his eye, which, by recalling associations of a time and place far distant, roused him at once to open fury. A mother bearing her lifeless child along, hopelessly and irretrievably frantic! Regardless of the wound which had been inflicted on her tender frame—fearless of the pursuers, who hunted her with brandished blades—she dandled the clay-cold body in the air, or hushed it in her bleeding bosom, humming wild fragments, which her memory yet retained, from melodies of happier days. At once the snow-storm on the banks of Esk, his own beloved bride, frenzied and perishing beside the first-born pledge of her affections, rushed instantaneously upon his mind. “Accursed butchers, hold!” he shouted in a voice of thunder, and, ere they could obey his bidding, the foremost fell, precipitated by the swiftness of his previous motion, ten feet in front of his intended victim;—and a second, and a third staggered away from his tremendous blows mortally wounded, while the rest—struck with astonishment at seeing one, whom they, till now, had followed as a champion in their cause, stand forth in the defence of a proscribed heretic—faltered, and skulked aside like rated hounds.

Ere he had time to reflect on the consequences of his rashness, a well-remembered voice thrilled in his ear, “’Tis he!” No more was spoken; but in that brief sentence, he had heard and recognised his doom. Turning toward the palace-front, he marked the form of Catharine, leaning from the window; and pointing, in all the eagerness of hatred, her extended arm to his own person; behind her, he could just distinguish the sallow features of the king, reaching his hand to grasp the matchlock, which a courtier loaded at his elbow. “I shall

die!" muttered the undaunted Scot, "but unavenged, never!" A petronel was in his hand—the muzzle bore fully on the majestic figure of the queen, his finger pressed the trigger—he paused, stood like a statue carved in marble, his weapon still directed to the mark, and that falcon glance, which never yet had missed its aim, fixed steadfastly upon its object! He saw the carabine of the tyrant rise slowly to its level, yet he fired not! The person of Charles was screened by the intervention of his mother's breast. "Devil!" he shouted—"devil that thou art—exult in thine impunity! No Hamilton hath ever harmed a woman!" The carabine was discharged, but no motion of the Scot showed what had been the event! The brow was still serene, the arm extended, and the eyeball calm as ever! The hand rose higher, till the pistol pointed perpendicularly upward—the report rang clearly into the air—and ere the echoes passed away, the gallant, but misguided soldier lay a corpse upon the bloody pavement—cut off himself, as he had slain the oppressor, by the bullet of a concealed assassin. Such are the ways of Providence.

AHSAHGUNUSHK NUMAMAHTAHSENG;

Or, the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind.

INTRODUCTION.

ALONG the whole north shore of Lake Huron, extending over not much less than five degrees of latitude from north to south, and varying from forty to one hundred miles in width, there lies a vast expanse of navigable water, known as the Georgian bay; the shores of which to this hour are almost untrodden, except by the moccasined foot of the red man, and the surface of which is almost unfurrowed by the keel of modern adventure.

Divided by a long promontory, the precipitous cape of which has taken its name of Cabot's head from a huge projecting boulder on its summit, and by the extended and almost continuous chain of the Manitoulin islands, from the main lake, the Georgian bay, from its size, its depth, the great rivers which it receives, and the unnumbered harbors of refuge with which its iron-bound coasts are indented, deserves rather to be regarded as in itself a lake, than merely as a portion of the gigantic Huron.

Yet, in spite of its magnificent extent, the unrivalled purity of its deep, dark blue, yet wondrously transparent waters, the wild magnificence of its iron scenery, I know nothing so lonely, nothing which impresses the mind of the voyager with so utter a sense of solitariness, as a sail on its unfrequented bosom.

For days—for days—you may steam or sail right onward, with the mainland, or the thousand islands, ever in view, yet not a sail, not the bark of an Indian, not the smoke of a wigwam shall vary the desolate sublimity of the scene; unless you leave the direct course, to visit some one of the Indian villages or the miners' stations, which of late are beginning to grow up along the northern shore.

Only three vessels, to this day, cross the waters of the Georgian bay; one a small schooner employed for the supply of the Bruce mines; the second, a clever little steamer, the Gore, plying between Penetanguishine, whence there is an easy portage to Toronto and the Sault St. Marie; and the third, the Mohawk man-of-war steamer, whose summer cruising-ground embraces all the upper lakes from the great Falls of Niagara to the lovely rapids of the Sault St. Marie. The great line of western travel, lying along the southern and western shores which are visited daily, I had almost said hourly during the summer months, by steamers of most luxurious accommodation, and sailing craft of every rig and almost every burthen, leaves the stormy and rock-bound expanse of the Georgian bay far aloof; and few are the visitors who have seen its wondrous beauties, or penetrated into the mysteries of rock, wilderness, and river, cataract, rapid, swamp, and rice lake, which diversify its northern shore with an endless labyrinth of most romantic beauty.

Neither the highlands of the Hudson, nor the thousand isles of the far-famed St. Lawrence, have to me the charm of the

wild, solitary, silent grandeur of the Huron. Waters so clear, that you can mark each prominence or cranny of the granite rock, number each long and sinuous blade of the watergrass, count every fish that wags a fin, five fathoms deep, more easily than so many inches in our eastern streams or lakelets—shores so bold, that a man-of-war can lie broadside against the rocks, moored to the mighty pines, whose foliage makes wild music to the gale from which they shelter her, many and many a yard above her topmasts. No sounds or sights of life save the plash of the heavy sturgeon falling back on the mirrored surface, and breaking the green-wood picture, which slept there so calmly bright, into a thousand glancing ripples; save the wild, tremulous note, how like the Ossianic notion of a spirit's cry, of the great northern diver; save the circling swoops of the snowy terns and gulls; and, now perhaps and again, at rare intervals, the heavy shadow cast on the sunny lake from the broad wings of the bald-headed eagle, sailing between it and the sun, and overcoming its clear surface most like a summer cloud.

Such, and such only, are the sounds and sights which he will hear and see, who voyages across those lonely waters, in these days of vaunted progress and increased civilization.

But not so it was two hundred years ago; for then those grand, and good, and brave discoverers, those only real civilizers, only consistent benefactors of the savage, the French Jesuits, were in their full career of enterprise, and usefulness, and charity. Whatever may have been the course, in the Old World, of this great, active, energetic, self-devoting sect, one thing at least is certain, that from the first to the last in the New World, of North America at least, they have been signally, confessedly, and incontrovertibly, the benefactors of mankind.

Strange it would seem, but so it is, that from the first intro-

duction of catholicism by the French into the northern, and by Lord Baltimore into the southern, regions of North America, the very genius of that religion changed its nature.

While the various sects of the protestants were martyring one another, and combining only to butcher and rob the red man; while the puritans were hanging quakers, banishing baptists, burning witches, depopulating the catholic settlements, and barbarously misusing the mild and peaceful settlers of Acadia, offering rewards for the scalps of heathen, and coolly sentencing independent princes, such as the brave Can-onchet, last of the Narragansets, or the right royal Wampanoag Philip, to cold-blooded slaughter, the Jesuits with a pure zeal, an humble self-devotion, worthy the followers of Him whose followers they claim to be, were incurring pains and perils equal almost to those of the first apostles, valuing their lives at nothing, and dying with serene and Christian fortitude, prompted by no desire but that of winning converts to the Christian fold, and aiming at no other object than the precept of their order, the sublime *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

The great discoverers, and first explorers, the most authentic and trustworthy historians, of our inland waters and far western territories, neither climate nor distance, neither peril nor suffering, deterred the dauntless Jesuits, where there were wonders of nature to be rescued from the gloom of the primeval forest, or souls of mortal men to be snatched from the more perilous darkness of heathendom.

To the honor of the Frenchmen and the Jesuit, then, be it recorded, and I, though neither of his race nor his religion, will never cease to insist on its remembrance, that in no single instance, do we find him using his superior force or his superior wisdom, otherwise than as a true friend, and to the extent of his lights, an honest spiritual counsellor, of the North American savage.

Unlike the proud ecclesiastics, luxurious, greedy, fierce, and cruel, who hounded the Cortez and the Pizarros against the softer savage of the southern hemisphere, kindling the fagot and sanctioning the rack, and baptizing with blood and fire only, the French Jesuit used no weapons for conversion but purity of life, humility of bearing, faith, charity, and a zeal unconquerable for the extension of his religion.

Never the torturers, often the tortured, of their half-barbarous converts; men often of the highest birth; men always of the brightest parts and profoundest learning; they took upon themselves the cross of Christ, and exchanged the most polished court and country of the then world, for the howling wilderness; and that without the hope of temporal or spiritual advancement, without the possibility of gaining wealth or fame, at the total sacrifice of every worldly comfort, at the almost certain risk of their lives. They lived unselfish, and they died undaunted, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

Honor to the memory, peace to the ashes, of the French Jesuits! Their bodies have long mouldered away under the sere leaves of the forest; the very tribes whom they taught, and by whose hands they fell, have long since vanished from the face of the earth; but their souls live for ever in His keeping, who sees the motive of the heart as clearly as the deed of the hand, and will repay a thousand-fold the good works wrought in his name, and for his love and honor.

I have wandered among the sites of their ruined stations; I have sat on the grassy mounds, whence they perchance preached the word of life to their dusky converts; whereon perchance they writhed in torment at the stake, invoking mercy from on high with their last breath upon their ignorant destroyers.

And I know nothing more affecting, nothing that leaves a deeper or more melancholy impress on the heart, than when, after walking miles along some difficult Indian trace, or pad-

dling the birch canoe over the dim and solemn waters of some forest-embowed river, one suddenly emerges, under the glimmering moonlight, or the fresh, dewy dawn, into the long-deserted clearing, once fertilized by the hands of the good churchmen ; and gazes upon the ruins of the outposts erected in the extremest solitudes, not against earthly foes, but against the arch-enemy of man.

There one may trace, even now, by the surrounding objects, the routine of their innocent and blameless lives ; there, was the garden where they raised their frugal stores ; even now all wild, degenerated, and untrained, he may discover the scions of the European fruit-trees, which they brought from the apple-orchards of old Normandy, or the richer districts of Touraine ; here is the spring, whence they drew the water which, it may well be, sealed the Christianity of Iroquois or Huron neophytes, long ere the Ojibwas or Pottowatomies brought fire and havoc from their southern hunting-grounds, and quenched the altars with the blood of their own unresisting ministers.

Many a legend dwells, to this day, about the places which their deaths and their lives have alike rendered holy ; and although these are related now by the descendants of the very tribes who slaughtered them, yet they are told with sympathy, and oftentimes with real sorrow ; for the Ojibwas now no more sacrifice the white dog at the full of the moon, but are gathered for the most part under the same mild Christian rule professed by the Iroquois, whom two centuries ago they slaughtered as idolaters.

None of these struck me as more sadly solemn, than this of Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, or the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind, an Ojibwa girl, who, in those dark and bloody days, brought, like another Helen, havoc and desolation whither she had laid up her fatal, though not guilty love.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAIDEN.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament ;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair ;
Like twilight's too her dusky hair ;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn.

WORDSWORTH.

It was already daylight, though the sun had not yet risen above the tops of the forest-trees, which formed the visible horizon ; and from the aspect of the skies overhead, and the soft, dewy coolness of the fragrant morning air, it promised to be as beautiful a summer day as ever gladdened the face of earth. There were but two, or three, small, fleecy specks of cloud, suspended motionless near the zenith, visible in the dark azure of the skies ; and these were changing their hues momentarily, as long lustrous rays came stealing up from the eastward, harbingers of the sun's advent. A moment ago, they were plain, sad-colored, gray patches on the blue ground-work ; gradually a dull purple glazed them over ; that brightened into rose-color ; into rich carmine ; and now they are glittering like coals of fire, or flecks of molten gold, mirrored as clearly in the still, narrow, brimful river, as they glow aloft in the summer sky.

The thin, light mist, which crept up awhile since from the surface of the translucent stream, has melted into air ; and the

evergreens on the farther shore, huge hemlocks and heaven-reaching pines, which grow down to the very water's edge, are reflected so wondrously distinct, dark feathery plumage, arrowy limbs, and white, weather-bleached centennial trunks, that it were a very true eye which should define at once where is the meeting of the reality and of the shadow. Ever and anon a plump of duck and mallard come sweeping over head, above the tops of the highest trees, the strident whistle of their wings first attracting the eye to their quick, glancing flight, and are scarce seen before they have darted out of sight beyond the wooded point that bounds the next reach of the gentle river. Once and again a heavy shadow flits over the smooth expanse, the image as it seems of a gigantic pair of wings, overshadowing half the width of the sunlighted channel. It ceases suddenly, for the wings which projected it are folded, and there on the naked crest of a huge cypress, poising himself on the very pinnacle, sits the bald-headed eagle, watching to see the parent duck lead forth her fledgling brood from the cool covert of the sheltering lily-leaves, which overspread the shoals, and give the wary water-birds a sure asylum. There flits, along the pebbly margins, the noisy yellow-leg, the golden plover, or the small-spotted sand-piper, each in pursuit of some small worm or insect, its peculiar prey. There the harsh-screaming kingfisher circles above the small fry, as they dimple the tranquil surface, hunting fry smaller yet, and yet more powerless. There again, motionless as the gray trunk behind him, which in hue he most resembles, patient and watchful, stands the great blue heron; and now he cocks his bright eye, and with an arrowy motion darts forward his long neck and javelin bill, transfixing with a pitiless stroke the monster bullfrog, chief basso of his aquatic orchestra, just as he has himself sucked in a beautiful golden and blue tibellula, as he hung poised with rapid wing over an open lotus flower. Here, in

the shadow of the bank, where the water sleeps so clearly in its brown, transparent reflections, mark, where, itself a shadow, lies in expectant ambush the lithe body of the great northern pickerel. There, he has struck at a passing shiner, and ere the bright, silvery streak, that marked his rapid transit through the water, has subsided, a heavier plunge is heard; for the felon otter, watching from his hole under the tortuous alder-roots, has espied the motion, and pounced, tyrant-like, on the spoiled and the spoiler simultaneously.

So it is ever, in the wilderness as in the world, the strong prey still upon the weak, and the weak on the weaker. All life is one long flight from those to be avoided, one long pursuit of those to be made captive. From the man, half divine, to the reptile, less than the brute, there is no rest, no respite—to take or be taken, to slay or to be slaughtered, such seem to be the conditions on which the boon of life is held; nor is the crowded haunt, the boasted mart of civilized life in great cities, in this respect endowed with one immunity beyond the lonely forest, or the howling desert.

That is a wild and lonely spot even now, and few and rare are the settlements around it, either of the white man or the half-civilized Ojibwa or Pottawatomie, but at the time at which I write, there was no spot more savage, nor farther removed, as it would seem, from every human influence, than the wild woods, the rocky shores, and the still waters, which surrounded the embouchure of what is now known as the river Wye into the eastern end of the great Georgian bay.

The eye of the white man, even now, as he paddles across the inner cove into which the deep, clear, narrow river opens, fails to detect the smallest opening in the dense tree-tops of the forest through which the brimful river finds its outlet, nor does the bosom of the bay itself indicate, in the least degree, that large mass of extraneous waters which here should swell its

volume, for it is shoal to the last degree, and overgrown with a luxuriant vegetation of wild rice and reeds, through which steal deviously a hundred tortuous and unsuspected channels, through which only can the ponderous dug-out of the Canadian Frenchman, or the light birch canoe of the native, find its way into the entrance of the river.

The keener glance of an Indian, however apt to see things with a sort of reasoning and inquiring gaze, deductive rather than intuitive, would not be long in discovering that there ran through those woods, seemingly so uninterrupted and unbroken, a division line of some kind, regular though circuitous, nor in suspecting that division line to be water; for whereas the northern shore of the stream consists of low, damp, swampy land, for a mile or two up the course of the river, covered with a growth of tamarack, hemlock, and cedar, that to the south is higher, bolder, drier, and is overspread by a finer forest of oak, maple, birch, and poplar, with here and there the arrowy cone of a gigantic white-pine, piercing the clouds a hundred feet above the summits of its deciduous brethren.

To the ordinary eyes of the traveller or searcher of the picturesque, signs like these have no meaning; but to the half-wild forester or to the aboriginal man of the woods, they speak volumes, and thence it is that to find any retreat so sure as to baffle the instinct and blind the eyes of an Indian warrior on the war-path, is one of the things—the few things on earth—which may be set down, as the rule, to be impossible.

Nor had it escaped the penetration of the natives, that there was more than ordinary facility in supporting their family relations to be found in the neighborhood of the embouchure of the beautiful Wye; for even at that early day, when the Iroquois or Huron tribe were the sole possessors of the northern shores of the great lakes, and when their villages and wigwams, even upon their shores and water-courses, were few

and far between, it would seem that they had established some settlement in that vicinity, tempted, it may be, by the abundance of fish which swam those limpid waters, and of fowl which fed almost unmolested among the wild-rice lakes into which its upward course expanded.

At the point of view whence we first looked on the tranquil river, with its lazy eddies and many-colored, beautiful reflections, the southern shore jutted forward in a wide, semi-circular bend, above and below which the dense evergreens, which were the only indications of the northern shore, seeming to swim on the bosom of the slow-flowing stream, swept forward in their turn for a hundred yards or so, when the southern bank again advanced, and suffering a double reach to be seen, resembling in shape an inverted letter S, cut off all farther view in either direction so completely, that had it not been for the quiet and sleepy swirls of the downward current, and the narrowness and regularity of the channel as compared to its width, the river might have been easily mistaken for an inland pool or lakelet.

On both sides of the water many trees had fallen into the stream, and lay some up, some down, some partially across the current, and these of such giant bulk and colossal height, that had two chanced to lie directly opposite, their branches would have mingled, and they would actually have bridged the stream; nay, they might well, as I have often seen in that region, when backed by deposit after deposit of drift-wood, floating trees, reeds, rice, and river trash, have formed a raft, and becoming gradually covered with decomposed vegetable matter, and overgrown with parasitic plants and shrubs, have assumed the semblance of firm soil, with the slow waters soaking constantly, although unseen, below them, on their way to swell the everlasting chorus of Niagara, and sweep triumphant

into the huge Atlantic, through that incomparable artery of North America, the grand estuary of the St. Lawrence.

In this instance, however, perhaps by the constancy and strength of the slow current, perhaps by human agency, for a keen eye might detect the marks of the axe on some of the massive bolls, the course of the river had been kept clear, and though a canoe, either ascending or descending, must have run a zigzag or circuitous course, in order to escape interruption from the snags and sawyers, as they would be termed on the southern waters, these in no case interlapped or lay within forty or fifty feet distance of each other.

One of these trees, a vast white-oak, completely barked, and bleached by the suns and snows, of fierce summers, burning with almost tropic heat, and of winters, second to Zembla's or Spitzbergen's only, had fallen from the extremity of the forward bend of the southern shore, and lay somewhat down stream, with its huge twisted roots standing erect and grisly, a huge matted cheval-de-frize at the water's brink, and its great gnarled and knotted branches partly imbedded in the mud, partly overhanging the shallow which itself had created with a canopy of moss and river-weeds, and all the trash accumulated from a hundred floods and freshets.

Immediately below this, and so well concealed as to be invisible to a casual observer, lay moored a birch-canoe of the elegant form and delicate structure of the vessels of the aborigines, and in it, busily employed even at that early hour in ensnaring the finny denizens of the waters, sat a girl of some sixteen or seventeen years, whom it required no second glance to know for a child of the wilderness.

It is well known to those who have been in the habit of observing the North American tribes in their natural state, removed from the contamination to which they now seem almost inevitably subject on the slightest contact with the whites, that,

despite the detractions of color and of an uncouth and uncomely costume, there is often, not only a rare beauty, but a rare fascination about the younger Indian females, although it may not at the same time be denied, that were a painter in search of a model, wherefrom to design with the most *vraisemblance* the likeness of his majesty of the infernal regions, he could not do better than to select an old squaw, of it matters not what tribe, and his type of the hideous, the repulsive, and the horrible, must needs be perfect.

The girl in question was slender, delicate, and elastic as a reed swaying in the currents of a gentle breeze, and what is unusual among the aborigines, the females of whom are inclined to be squat and dwarfish, was considerably above the ordinary stature even of white girls, while all the outlines of her graceful yet voluptuous figure, displayed a perfect unison of all the lithe and fragile symmetry of girlish years with the mature developments of perfect womanhood.

Her brow and face were dark, but not much darker than I have seen in the liquid-eyed damas of Venice, or the stately Spanish donnas, and the rich blood crimsoned her full, pouting lips, and flushed, peach-like, through the golden hue of her cheeks, with as warm a tide as ever burned in the impassioned cheeks of an Anglo-Norman beauty.

Her long, straight hair, not curling in the least, nor waving, nor yet in the slightest degree hard or wiry, fell down behind her small ears, being braided in front in two broad bands over the temples, and confined by a fillet or coronal of blue and white wampum, stitched upon a thong of deer-skin, in loose, heavy, soft, flowing masses, such as we see in some of the portraits of Velasquez and other Spanish masters. It was of the deepest and most perfect blackness, black as ebony or as night, without the slightest indication of that purplish metallic lustre which generally plays over what is not unfitly called

raven hair in women of white blood, and more especially in those of Irish race. Her eyes had the long, almond-shaped orbits, and long-fringed lashes, which are deemed the rarest charm of Italian beauty, and the large, soft pupils of the deepest, clearest hazel, swam in a field of nacry bluish lustre, which could be compared to nothing but the finest mother-of-pearl.

Her cheeks were flushed, at the moment when we look upon, and her bright lips disparted with a gay smile, as she pulled in, each after each, the glittering rock-bass, resplendent in their golden armor, and watched these trophies of her prowess flapping in the bottom of her canoe, till the gay sheen of their scaly coats faded into the dull, blank hues of death. And as those bright lips fell asunder in her mood of gentle merriment, they displayed a set of teeth so brilliant, so delicately pure and transparent in their undefiled enamel, that the most gorgeous belle of courts and cities would have given the best jewels she possessed in exchange for those gems of nature's giving.

Her features, if they had not the regular and perfect symmetry, the complete oval contour, and the short-arched, wreathed upper lip of the Greek profile, nor yet the high-born, glorious dignity of the superb Norman type, had yet a harmony and unison entirely their own, a soft, tranquil, half-unconscious majesty of stillness—something that leads you to revert your thoughts to older worlds, or at least ages more remote, when this earth was haply peopled by tribes less far removed from the awful serenity of the immortals, such as sits to this hour wonderfully enthroned on the calm brow and solemn, tranquil beauty of the Egyptian sphynx.

Yet in this solemn fixedness of feature, this serene seriousness of outline, there was nothing lewd or unwomanly; for in so much as the outlines were statuesque and grave, the eyes

wildly serious, was the expression at times arch and almost jocund, and the smile of the wreathed and dimpled lips all that could be desired of winning, feminine, and tender.

It is remarkable, too, that although habituated more or less, as all Indian females must necessarily be, to labors of a harder and more abject nature than are attributed even to the poorest and rudest American females of the white race, her hands were as delicate and small, with slight, round, tapering fingers, and long, oval nails, as those of any princess of unmixed Norman race. Her moccasined feet, too, were delicately and proportionately small, not "cribbed, cabined, and confined"—like those of many of our modern damsels, who, in this, appear to imitate the high castes of the Chinese—till she could neither stand nor go, but betokening at once delicacy of structure and fitness for the purposes to which they were created by that Providence which assuredly never made aught except unto its end.

Her dress was peculiar, for it indicated that, even in that remote angle of the northern wilderness, thousands of miles aloof from the small and recent seaboard settlements of the whites, white luxuries were attainable for the gratification of female vanity. The tiara of wampum about her head was not the shell-manufactured wampum of the natives, but of fine blue and white Parisian bead-work. Her principal garment was a short petticoat, or tunic, not unlike that of the huntress Diana, leaving the right breast exposed, and barely reaching to the knee, of bright azure broadcloth, with a shoulder belt, girdle, and fringe of bead-work. Her lower limbs were protected by leggings of dressed deer-skin, as finely wrought as the most costly texture of the Flemish or English looms, and her feet covered by moccasins, elaborately embroidered with dyed horse-hair, which must evidently have been brought a long distance from the eastward, since the gigantic animal which

furnishes it so rarely found to the southwestward of the great Canadian Ottawa, that it may be held to be unknown in those regions.

Such was Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, or the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind, the fatal heroine of a disastrous legend; the fairest daughter of Chingwauk, the White Pine, the great chief of the Ojibwas, cast by singular fortunes, and strange ends, into a region many hundred leagues to the northwest of the hunting-grounds of her tribesmen.

CHAPTER II.

THE JESUIT.

THE morning wore on calmly, brightly, and the sun, whose long, upward rays had been for above an hour streaming toward the zenith, above the waving tree-tops, now raised the upper limb of his bright disk above the rich green foliage, and poured a flood of golden lustre directly downward into the woodland channel of the stream, and lighted its translucent waters down to its depths of gravelly sand, and long river-weeds fantastically curling in the gentle current. Up to this time the maiden had sat nearly motionless in her light bark canoe, scarcely stirring a limb, unless to draw in another and another of her scaly captives, to renew her bait upon the barbed steel hook—fresh evidence, by the way, of acquaintance with the whites—and to cast out her line again into the little eddy among the branches of the submerged trees in which the fish appeared to rejoice especially.

Now, however, the sun shooting his beams downward, the fish began to show themselves indisposed to bite so freely as

before, and very soon refused altogether to take the deceptive lure, whether that the increase of light enabled them the better to descry the shining artifice, or that the movements of the waving shadows on the surface, whenever the fair angler moved her hand, betrayed her whereabouts, and scared them from the tempting morsel.

The girl, seeing that for the present there was no more sport to be had, was already busied in taking apart her light tackle, winding up her line on a delicately-wrought wooden reel, and securing her priceless hook ; and that task ended, had already lifted her paddle from the bottom of the canoe in order to alter her position, when almost simultaneously two widely different, and, in that deep solitude, most unaccustomed sounds disturbed the silence of the forest.

The first of these, in point of time, was the near report of one of the lighter firearms of that day, such as were used in the most civilized countries of Europe in the chase, and known as carabines, or birding-pieces, and that the weapon had not been discharged in vain, was proved by the plunge of a beautiful summer duck, the handsomest of all the aquatic fowls, from its perch on the projecting branch of a tall white-oak, into the water beneath, on the surface of which it struggled impotently for a moment or two, and then lay motionless and lifeless, dying the slow ripples with a large patch of dark gore from its bill, gasping now no longer.

The other sound was the deep, melancholy, silver tone of a large bell floating down the light air, and down the channel of the river, from a short distance toward the uplands—a bell so singularly soft and sweet, so serenely musical and melodious, that its cadences would have been remarked for their wild, sonorous swell, and long-drawn fall, even in populous cities, where all the arts are called into play, to minister not to the necessities only, but to the luxuries of life. In that wild

region, therefore, untrodden as one would have been prompt to believe by any steps save those of the prowling wild beast or the heathen and untutored savage, how singularly exquisite seemed that slow and solemn harmony—that harmony peculiarly the utterance of civilization, of humanity, of the innocent and pure religion of the white man—he and he only can judge aright, who, after wandering, after sojourning, far aloof from the haunts of men, comes suddenly upon the traces of the ploughshare and the axe, and pausing on the verge of some small forest-clearing, listens, astonished half, and all enraptured, to the familiar music, long unheard of, the old village-bells.

There is no sound on earth by which the human soul is rapt so suddenly away from the present scene, from the present train of thoughts, yea, from its very self, and all the strongest of its secret aspirations, to the long past, the long-forgotten, as the music of a distant bell heard in the wilderness. Oftentimes, when I, wandering as I have imagined very far from the nearest settlement among the gigantic pines and venerable silence of the western Canadian forest, have been surprised from myself, and charmed away to scenes far beyond the wild-rolling Atlantic, to the green hills and gentle pastures of my childhood's home, even by the wild and inharmonious clank of a cow-bell, gathering I know not what of romance, and even melody from the accompanying scenery and circumstances, and wafting back the willing mind from savage solitude to old civilization.

At the first sound, the long, re-echoing gun-shot, the girl started, and after gazing earnestly, and with something of anxiety in her eye toward the direction whence it came, dropped the blade of her paddle noiselessly into the water, and by a dexterous turn of the wrist, sent the head of the canoe gliding swift and easy as a bird through the air into the little

eddy among the boughs of the fallen tree. Another and another sweep of the light paddle, delivered all so dexterously that not a splash could be detected as the blade entered or left the water, forced it out clear into the glassy current above the obstacle which seemed to bar its way, so that before five seconds had elapsed from the occurrence of the alarm, if such it were to be considered, the light vessel had shot with its fair freight, six times its own length up the stream, and was glancing over the creeping eddies at a safe distance from the bank, like a creature endowed with volition and swift self-motion.

At the next instant the deep tone of the bell swelled upon her ear—again—again—again—clearly the Christian's summons to the worship of his God.

And yet who would have deemed that in that lonely and remote corner of the wilderness, at that far-distant period, when the very discovery of the New World, as men called it, was but recent, and the most satisfactory attempts at its colonization as yet but an experiment, who would have deemed it possible that the God of nature should have been worshipped otherwise than by the free and natural influences of the outward world, by the grateful choirs of the rejoicing songsters of the woodland, by the rich incense of the flowers ascending toward heaven on the wings of the morning dew, by the instinctive, vague, and untutored emotions which dwell even in the breast of the wild native of the wilderness?

Who should have reared a house to the King, Creator, Savior of the universe,—a house raised with hands in the howling wilderness, or hung aloft that silver-tongued appellant, summoning all those who are heavy-laden to cast down their burthens at the foot of that cross by which alone they should find penitence, and peace, and pardon?

By whom could it, indeed, have been raised, by whom sanctified, by whom daily administered among toils, and woes,

and perils, such as scarce any of the sons of men, since the first martyrs of the earliest Christian era, have encountered, save by the members of that wonderful, that self-denying order, the policy of which, sacrificing all individuality, all personal independence, all power, all pleasure, all ambition of the single man, had exalted the society of Jesus into a unity so complete, so unassailable, and so puissant, that kings and pontiffs equally submitted to its dictation, equally shrank from disputing its gigantic dominion, or holding out against its masterly organization.

The word Jesuit has been used too often in our protestant language to signify the very embodiment and personification of bigotry, cruelty, artifice, deception, all, in short, that is known as priestcraft, and that of the most odious and intolerant description, until men have forgotten how much of good mingled with evil there has existed from the beginning in the history of Jesuitism, and how much the civilized world, and the world of North America more particularly, is indebted to these enthusiastic missionaries, these self-denying teachers of the savage, these undaunted explorers of the wilderness.

"When the Jesuits," says Macaulay, an authority not to be doubted or disputed, when he appears as the eulogist either of the church of England or the church of Rome, to both of which he bears the genuine hatred of the radical dissenter, "came to the rescue of the papacy, they found it in extreme peril; but from that time the tide of battle turned. Protestantism, which had during a whole generation carried all before it, was stopped in its progress and rapidly beaten back from the foot of the Alps to the shores of the Baltic. Before the order had existed a hundred years, it had filled the whole world with memorials of great things done and suffered for the faith. No religious community could produce a list of men so variously distinguished; none had extended its operations over so vast

a space ; yet in none had there ever been such perfect unity of feeling and action. There was no region of the globe, no walk of speculative or active life in which Jesuits were not to be found. They guided the councils of kings. They deciphered Latin inscriptions. They observed the motion of Jupiter's satellites. They published whole libraries, controversy, casuistry, history, treatises on optics, alcaic odes, editions of the fathers, madrigals, catechisms, lampoons. The liberal education of youth passed almost entirely into their hands, and was conducted by them with conspicuous ability. They appear to have discovered the precise point to which intellectual culture can be carried without risk of intellectual emancipation. Enmity itself was compelled to own that in the art of managing and forming the tender mind they had no equals. Meanwhile they assiduously and successfully cultivated the eloquence of the pulpit. With still greater assiduity and still greater success, they applied themselves to the ministry of the confessional. Throughout catholic Europe the secrets of every government, and of almost every family of note, were in their keeping. They glided from one protestant country to another under innumerable disguises, as gay cavaliers, as simple rustics, as puritan preachers. They wandered to countries which neither mercantile avidity nor liberal curiosity had ever impelled any stranger to explore. They were to be found in the garb of mandarins superintending the observatory at Peking. They were to be found, spade in hand, teaching the rudiments of agriculture to the savages of Paraguay. Yet, whatever might be their residence, whatever might be their employment, their spirit was the same, entire devotion to the common cause, implicit obedience to the central authority.

"None of them had chosen his dwelling-place, or his avocation for himself. Whether the Jesuit should live under the arctic circle, or under the equator, whether he should pass his

life in arranging gems or callating manuscripts in the Vatican, or in persuading naked barbarians in the southern hemisphere, not to eat one another, were matters which he left with profound submission to the decision of others. If he was wanted at Lima, he was on the Atlantic in the next fleet. If he was wanted at Bagdad, he was toiling through the desert with the next caravan. If his ministry was needed in some country where his life was more insecure than that of the wolf, where it was a crime to harbor him, where the heads and quarters of his brethren fixed in the public places, showed him what he had to expect, he went without remonstrance or hesitation to his doom. Nor is this heroic spirit yet extinct. When in our time, a new and terrible pestilence passed round the globe, when in some great cities fear had dissolved all the ties which held society together, when the secular clergy had deserted their flocks, when medical succor was not to be purchased with gold, when the strongest natural affections had yielded to the love of life, even then the Jesuit was found by the pallet, which bishop and curate, physician and nurse, father and mother had deserted, bending over infected lips to catch the faint accents of confession, and holding up to the last before the expiring penitent, the image of the inspiring Redeemer."

Admirable indeed were the exertions, the virtues, and the sufferings of many, very many of these great and good men, and if an over-enthusiasm for the good of their own order, and for what they honestly believed to be the greater glory of God, did at times in the Old World—as most assuredly it did—lead them into tortuous policy, entangle them in the sophistical casuistries of cabinets, and the perilous intrigues of courts, if it did lead them too often to regard the expedient rather than the good, and to permit and sanction of the doing of evil that haply good might come of it, no such stigma rests upon their memories in this hemisphere, aloof from court intrigues and

cabinet ambition. Here they were the civilizers only, the discoverers, the colonists, the fertilizers of the boundless waste—the friends, the teachers, the Christianizers, and, alas! but too often the martyrs of the stern and savage red man.

The falls of the farthest western rivers, from Niagara to the head-waters of the Mississippi and the foaming rapids of the Sault St. Marie, the forest and the prairie, yea! the ice-bound pinnacles of the Rocky Mountains, were familiar to their wandering footsteps; and before commerce or agriculture had begun to hold dominion along the shores of the Atlantic, they were felling the trees of the wilderness far to the northward of the great lakes, choosing their stations with rare sagacity—for there be now but few of them which are not the sites of great and prosperous cities—and sowing in the breasts of their Indian neophytes that good seed of faith, which should lead by grace of the Most High unto eternal life.

They it was, then, who had built their fort, not so much against human foes, as against the arch-enemy of man, upon the northern bank of the gentle Wye, who had gathered about the palisades of their Mission a small but faithful congregation of the Iroquois or Hurons of the Lakes, and passed their lives in innocence and peace “in that vast contiguity of shade,” wresting by degrees orchards, and gardens, and green fields, from the dominion of the forest; rescuing by degrees, from the mists and thick darkness of ignorance and belief, the souls of their dark-skinned brethren.

Their bell it was which now resounded so sadly, solemnly sweet through the dim aisles of the forest, and over the surface of the long-resounding waters—truly their silver bell—its cadences are familiar to my ears, for it has survived those who brought it hither to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel, it has survived their very destroyers, and now, when the sons of a different race hold the soil which whilom they cul-

tivated, when a different language is spoken in their abiding-places, it still hangs aloft above a Christian place of worship, though not of their faith who then woke its mellow cadences. still summons those who believe to the altar of the same God, one and eternal, and the same for ever, whom the French Jesuit adored when its first appeal awakened the forest echoes.

As the girl caught the pleasant sounds of the church-bell, a well-pleased smile lighted up her gentle features, and the uneasy expression passed away from her, as the shadow of a cloud is chased from a landscape by the sunny gleam, as she made her light bark literally almost fly under the measured strokes of her fairy paddle. She had already doubled the first bend of the river, and, keeping well in toward the bank by which she had been fishing, had interposed the wooded point between herself and any curious eyes, which might be watching her from below, when a tall young Indian, clad in hunting-shirt, leggins, and moccasins of dressed deer-skin, and carrying a long gun in his hand, made his appearance on the same side of the stream, some ten or twelve yards at most below the place where the maiden was fishing, when the shot was fired, and applied himself at once to the recovery of the game he had killed. This did not occupy him many seconds, as the current had set the dead bird in shore, and his quick eye detected it in an instant, as it lay among the outer twigs of a red-alder bush which overhung the stream. As he picked it up, however, he did not fail to observe that a ripple different in its character from the regular run of the waters, broke on the sand-bank at his feet, and turning his glance instinctively up stream, although it was already fast subsiding into its wonted stillness, he was not long in satisfying himself that a canoe had passed up the Wye, and that within a few minutes.

Bounding forward, almost with the speed of a hunted deer, he gained the point in a moment, and running out upon the

slippery trunk of the fallen oak-tree, by the side of which the girl's canoe had been made fast, he caught a glimpse of her as she emerged from the cover of the foliage, and glided steadily upward across the next reach of the river.

"The Reed-shaken-by-the-wind," he muttered to himself, half thoughtfully, while a bright and pleasurable expression crossed his features, and then tossing up his arm, he uttered a long whoop to attract her notice, and as she turned her head to the perhaps unwelcome sound, beckoned her to return and take him on board.

But the girl, uttering a low cry in return, as soft and harmonious as his was dissonant and savage, shook her head half-coquettishly, half-resolutely, and pointing ahead with her paddle to the quarter whence the chime of the bell now came faster and more frequent, urged her light vessel ahead with renewed exertion, and in less than a minute shot round the turn of the verdurous banks and was lost to his view.

The Indian, who was evidently a chief, from the excellent condition of his garments and accoutrements, as well as from his richly-ornamented weapons, was clearly disconcerted; a gloom fell over his dusky features, and he frowned deeply. Had he been a white man, he would probably have given vent to his disappointment in an oath, but it is remarkable that blasphemy against the Author of his existence is peculiar to the cultivated and Christian white man, there being no oath or imprecation to be found in the vocabulary of any Indian tribe, even of those who pay respect and sacrifice, for the averting of his wrath, to the Spirit of Evil. He restrained himself for a moment or two, and stood apparently in thought. "Good!" he said at length, speaking in his own tongue. "Girl gone to French fathers. Very much love hear French fathers. Love too much, maybe. Bald-Eagle go too. Hear what say—see what do—then know what think, too." And attaching

the summer-duck to a bunch of several other water-fowl, which he had slung from his waist-belt, he set off through the open forest on the upland at the long, loping-trot for which the Indians are so famous, and which enables them to get over the ground so rapidly, when on their hunts or on the war-path.

Meanwhile, Ahsahgunushk had kept on her way paddling swiftly and silently, until she had rounded two more points of the shore, and had come into view of the Jesuit settlement and its clearings, lying fair to the long slant beams of the morning sun, sparkling with the dew-drops of the past night, as they hung diamond-like on the rustling leaves of the tall maize, or gemmed the tedded grass of the luxuriant meadows.

The little opening in the forest which had been reclaimed by the patient industry of the fathers from the solitude and wildness of the woods, contained about a hundred acres of upland, on both sides of the river, bounded on the lower side by the skirts of the primeval woodland, and extending upward to the edge of a natural wet savanna, which soon degenerated into rice swamp, through many a mile of which the river wound its devious way from the distant highlands. It was a tranquil and a beautiful scene, and one by no means destitute of refined ornament and the decorations of civilized life. The buildings of the Mission lay, as it has been stated, on the north shore of the river, just where a large brook, after running for some hundred yards directly parallel to the river, turned at right angles to its former course, and discharges a strong and rapid stream rushing impetuously through a deep ravine which forms two sides of a parallelogram. Of this accidental formation of the soil, the Jesuits, who possessed no slight degree of knowledge in both military and civil engineering, had taken advantage for the erection of their post, a bank having been thrown up along the inner line of this natural foss, with a strong though irregularly built stone tower in the angle. From

the upper end of the longer limb of the ravine a wide ditch, with a high interior bank, ran parallel to the outlet of the brook with a circular bastion or redoubt at the upper angle, where it again turned westerly until it terminated in a third redoubt at the junction of the brook with the river, the whole forming a large, oblong enclosure, with a length of about three hundred yards to the river face, and a depth of about one third that distance, the banks all round being garnished by a massive row of cedar palisades of fifteen feet in height, well braced together, and looped for musketry, besides being defended at the top by a strong cheval-de-frize, manufactured in the forge which the energetic priests had established and maintained within their guarded precincts.

Each of the redoubts was armed with two small brass swivel-guns, of the kind at that time known as "grasshoppers," something similar to what are now used in India under the name of wall-pieces, capable of carrying balls only of a pound or two calibre, but still useful for the defence of slight, irregular works against tumultuary force, such as Indians, inasmuch as they could sweep all the curtains with a hail of musket-bullets, which the red warriors would be most unapt to endure.

Within this rude and rustic fortification, for the cedar-posts, or trunks of which it was manufactured, were in their natural rough condition all gnarled and knotted, overgrown with moss, and in part overrun with ivy and various creepers, were the buildings of the Mission which consisted of an interior parallelogram, made of square logs, dove-tailed one into the other, to the height of two stories, with no windows or apertures of any kind to the exterior, except one large, two-leaved gate, giving access to the court within, which opened directly opposite to the entrance in face of the palisades, under a great tower, fashioned like a modern block-house, with the upper

floors overhanging substructure and surmounted by the belfry, whence pealed that sonorous and widely-venerated bell.

The buildings contained a chapel and library, occupying the whole front of the square opening to the right and left of the entrance archway, which was protected by strong double-doors of hewn timber. On the opposite side was the refectory on the ground-floor, and the dormitory of the father above, while the two ends of the court were occupied by kitchens and workshops for the carpenter, the smith, the cooper, with stithy, and turning-lathe, and tool-chests, and all appliances for useful labor. Store-houses, and a dormitory for the lay brothers were above these, and in the centre of the parellelogram was a small armory, well stocked with the firearms of the day, whether for hunting or defence—swords, pikes, and some few pieces of defensive armor not as yet entirely disused, as morions, or sallets, or gorgets, for the protection of the head and neck.

For it must not be supposed that the Jesuits were of that drone-like breed of monks who vegetated in the convents of Italy, or the hill-monasteries of Syria and the Holy Land. Not they—these were practical, shrewd, able-bodied men, men of science, men of energy, men of the world—men forbidden by the rules of the order from no work of industry, of energy, or of skill, which might tend to the advancement of science, to the advancement of human happiness, above all to the advancement of their order. They were the men neither to be devoured unresisting by the wild beasts of the forest, nor to be tortured passively by its yet wilder human denizens—they were navigators, hunters, agriculturists, fishers, antiquarians, naturalists; they were the tamers of the forest no less than the teachers of the Indian—and not a few of them had been soldiers already, and had served with the carnal arm in the fierce religious wars of Spain and France and the Low Countries, nor would be apt to withdraw their hands now from

the sword's hilt, should it be necessary to do battle for the protection of their own lives, the safety of the order, and the defence of the settlement they had planted for the reclamation of the heathen, the salvation of souls, and the greater glory of God.

Without the palisades, however, though all within was strong and stern, and guarded with powerful mastiffs, chained to their kennels near the entrance, and a stout lay-brother at all times on duty as porter, nor ever without arms in reach, there was much ornament and graceful decoration. On the lower side of the fort, as it is still termed, for the outlines of the banks and fosses are still plainly discernible, as well as the ruins of the casemated stone tower, which was not improbably applied to more homely purposes in the preservation of their roots and vegetables from the severe frosts of the Canadian winter, the undergrowth of the forest grew up close to the farther edge of the ravine, for although in the first instance a wise precaution had led the Jesuits to fell the timber, so as to form an open glais for some fifty yards beyond their palisades, long security had in some sort begotten over-confidence, and the brushwood had been suffered to encroach on that side of the clearing, so that it was now covered with a dense and tangled thicket.

In front, however, between the stockade and the river, and around the upper end of the station extending back so far as to the brook, was a large and beautifully-kept garden, with espaliers thickly framed with foreign fruit-trees, and bowery walks overshadowed by trellices covered with both native and imported vines, and amid the deep beds of pot-herbs, salads, and cresses, and leguminous plants, and scarlet French beans and lentils, was many a plat of flowers, some redeemed from their wild state by sedulous cultivation, some doubly cherished because brought from the far and happy France, filling the air

with the rich musky odor of the roses of Provence, and greeting the eye with the gracious show of the fair lilies, the chosen flower of France.

Above the garden again was a large orchard, of peach, plum, apple, and pear, which though not large trees as yet, nor having in truth had time to become so, were thrifty and in good condition, and many of them were so heavily laden with fruit, that there could be no doubt it would be necessary to prop them up in order to sustain their full weight when in the maturity of autumn. Rich maize-fields encircled the young orchard, twinkling in the sunshine and rustling in the breeze, with a belt of rich emerald verdure, and again beyond these, interspersed with a few patches of rye, wheat, and barley, the level green meadows pastured by a small flock of sheep, and two or three little hardy Norman cows, stretched away to the eastward, till they were lost to view amid the rank luxuriance of the rich marshes.

A straight walk led down through the garden from the gate of the mission to the bank of the river, where a small wharf or jetty had been erected, at which lay a schooner-rigged pinace of some sixteen or eighteen tons, a couple of long, sharp, clinker-built rowing boats, like those used by smugglers in the British channel, two or three yawls and fishing-boats, of various kinds and dimensions, and a whole fleet of birch-canoes lying balanced like water-birds on the clear surface. A little shed on the margin of the stream was filled with oars, masts, sails, and paddles, and all the means and appliances for boating, fishing, or fowling, as very much of the subsistence both of the fathers and their Iroquois neophytes depended on one or other of these pursuits, for such they are even to this day, rather than sports in that wild region.

On the farther bank of the river the cleared land was of about the same extent, and with the same general character

of civilization, except that there were neither gardens nor orchards, while the maize fields were more extensive, and were intermixed with considerable tracts planted with esculent roots, and many of the coarser European vegetables. Almost exactly opposite to the fort, on a grassy table-land, below the cultivated grounds, and surrounded on two sides by the skirts of the forest, stood a small Huron village of about sixty lodges, built of stronger materials, and with a greater view to permanence than is usual with the dwellings of the aborigines. A council-lodge stood nearly in the centre of the area, around which the wigwams were irregularly scattered, but what seemed a strange and most unlooked-for appendage to a council-lodge of the rude Iroquois, a large crucifix of wood had been reared in front of it, supporting an effigy of the dying Redeemer, rudely but boldly sculptured in the soft wood, demonstrating that the labors of the good fathers had not been vain, and that the village was inhabited by neophytes who had inclined a willing ear to the admonitions of the order, and had turned their hearts to that meek and gentle faith, through which alone cometh salvation.

Dogs, children of all ages, canoes, racks for drying fish, and rude implements of husbandry and agriculture, lay scattered about; and among these, interspersed with European tools and instruments of steel and iron, lay many hammers, chisels, hatchets, and the like, shaped by untutored Indian skill out of the pure native copper of the lakes, which the aborigines had long worked and known how to temper to a degree of hardness unattainable by our utmost science, although, on the introduction of iron tools and weapons by the French, they speedily abandoned their use, deserted and blocked up the mouths of their mines, and concealed them with such care from the whites, that, although their existence was well ascertained, their whereabouts was never known to the Jesuits, and that it

is in comparatively latter days only that they have been re-discovered.

Such was the scene that had filled so many times before the eyes of Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, that it failed now to awaken any expression in her handsome features, and she exhibited only an anxiety to reach the dock of the mission, before the bell had ceased to ring, which it might now be speedily expected to do, since it had already changed its sweet and solemn cadence for the quick tremulous chime which precedes the cessation of the call to worship.

At the jetty, speaking gravely to some of the lay brethren, and to two or three scattered Indians, who as they left him hurried up toward the Mission, stood a tall young man, exhibiting nothing peculiarly clerical in his appearance, for he was not tonsured, but wore his long black hair falling in straight uncurled masses down either cheek; nor in his garb, except that he wore a large, showy crucifix about his neck, for he was clad in leather hunting-shirt, pantaloons, and moccasins, with a wood-knife in his belt, and a strong staff with an iron pike at the extremity in his hand. He was finely proportioned and of a graceful figure, but so slender and even thin, that he gave you the idea of having been emaciated by sickness or privation, and his singularly handsome intellectual features, with their dark olive hue, were so unnaturally sharpened, that they naturally conveyed the same impression.

A bright light flashed in the soft hazel eyes of the Reed-shaken-by-the wind; and a strange, fitful color flushed her dark cheeks as her eye fell on the commanding figure of the ascetic; and as her canoe came to land, she flung the deer-skin painter over one of the posts of the little dock, and hurried up toward him, with an air singularly blended of consciousness with timidity.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPOSAL.

RAOUL DE ROHAN, better known by his ecclesiastical title of Father Borromée, who was now attached to a mission of French origin, and supported entirely by the French government, which had seriously turned its attention to the colonization of the Canadas, and the northeastern provinces of the North American continent, was by birth a Frenchman, of the very highest birth and station. His family had given more than one marshal to their country, and the exploits of the name of De Rohan had been recounted in every clime whose air had fluttered the glorious oriflamme, whose sun had shone upon the glittering panoply and brandished arms of the patriotic leaders and daring hosts of France. Cast early upon the world, a noble and rich orphan, Raoul had followed the standard of his country for the aggrandizement of her ambitious monarch, had won great fame in the field while yet a mere boy, and had been permitted to buckle on the golden spurs of knighthood, long ere he had attained to the years of manhood. Nay! it was openly asserted that he might have aspired to the baton of a *maréchal* of France; but suddenly, none knew wherefore, he relinquished the dazzling career on which he had entered with such early promise, betook himself to Rome, where he joined the company of Jesus, and, before many years had passed, enjoyed as high a reputation for energy, zeal, learning, piety, eloquence, and absolute devotion to the interests of his order, as he had formerly achieved for conduct and valor in the tented field.

By the director-general of the order, he had been several times intrusted with missions of the highest importance in almost every quarter of the world, from Pekin to Paraguay, and from the shores of the Red sea and the summits of Lebanon and Sinai, to the turbid flood of the Mississippi and the cold crags of the Rocky Mountains. Nor had he once failed in eliciting the highest praise from his superiors, until he reached that pitch of eminence, most rare for his years, that whenever duties were canvassed of more than ordinary peril, and requiring more than ordinary powers and ability for their accomplishment, the father Borromeè was ever the first named, both as the fittest person to be employed and the most eager and earnest aspirant of the order.

Melancholy, grave, and taciturn, nay, almost cold in his natural deportment, few suspected, even those who knew him best, that the calm, tranquil exterior, the impassive lineaments, the voice imperturbable in its clear, slow, modulated flow, were but the draperies and disguise of a nature fiery and fierce as the noonday sun of the equator; and that under the cover of that iron self-control which seemed immovable as the earth-fast hills, there raged a very furnace of burning and blighting passions, a temper prone as the flint to give sparks of fire in return for stroke of steel, as prone as the snow-wreath to melt into pitiful tears at touch of human sympathy or sorrow. Strange stories had been rife when he resigned the sword and spurs for the crucifix and cowl, of frustrated affections, and the course of true love as usual run astray, of crimes and agonies, raptures and madness, but like vain rumors they died away, and none who looked now on the taciturn, emaciated priest, wasted with penance and maceration, watching and fasting, and every form of self-denial, could have deemed it possible that the very spirit of the gladiator, the very passions of the restless, reckless, roving soldier dwelt beneath the hair-shirt,

which he wore ever beneath the buckskin which was more fitting wear for the western wilderness than the surge cassock of the monk.

Yet, in despite his ascetism, the father Borromeè was a favorite among the brothers of his order, the chosen counsellor of his superior, and beloved by the Indians of the Mission with a love approaching almost to idolatry, which he was wont at times to censure in the frank and artless neophytes, as being greater in degree and more intense in its character than it became mortal creatures to bestow one upon the other. The secret of this lay perhaps in the fact that stern and rigid toward himself, he was indulgent, liberal, and unexact toward others; that grave and austere to himself when alone, he was genial, bland, and warm-hearted, toward others, and that his tact and tenderness in managing those full-grown children of nature's own framing, the red Indians, he was celebrated above the celebrated, and was everywhere, so far as his eloquence or his report had penetrated, the counsellor, the friend, and almost the father of those who loved to call themselves his red children.

It was toward this stately and dignified personage that the "Reed-shaken-by-the-wind" turned her footsteps, carrying in her hand the string of rock-bass which she had taken, and with a very singular expression in her large liquid eye, half-bashful and shy, yet half-alluring and attractive, and with something in her whole gait, air, and demeanor, that implied an eager desire to attract notice, mingled with a timidity more than mere girlish bashfulness, which seemed as if it must have its own peculiar meaning. Her eyes were downcast as she approached the priest, yet she shot long, furtive glances from beneath the deep-fringed lashes which were pencilled in strong relief against the glowing hues of her rich cheeks, for she blushed deeply, almost painfully as she became conscious that

his clear, cold, penetrating eye was fixed on her as she approached with intense scrutiny. As she drew nearer to him yet, she faltered more and more, and with her head bowed meekly, and her left arm pressed across her gently budding bosom, she knelt silently at his feet, laying her little offering of fish before him, and seeming to implore his blessing, although her lips could syllable no sounds to ask it.

The cold face of the impassive churchman relaxed not in the least, perhaps, if anything, it waxed graver, harder, and more solemn, and that deep, keen, gray eye pierced deeper, deeper, as if it would penetrate her soul, that she fancied she could almost feel its penetration like that of a two-edged instrument of steel.

At length, however, as if with something of an effort, he signed the cross over her brow, and then extending both hands with the palms deflected over her head—"Bless thee," he said, in tones full of calm, devotional affection, "bless thee, my daughter, and may He bless thee, whose blessing only avails anything, and keep thee to eternal life."

She rose slowly and gazed wistfully and gratefully into his eyes, and then turned as if to go toward the chapel, whither many of the Indians, as well as all the brothers and lay brothers of the company were flocking in from the fields, when his steady and harmonious voice arrested her.

"Ahsahgunushk, whither goest thou?"

"To church, father," she replied, speaking in singularly pure French, with an accent hardly at all foreign or provincial. "I am almost too late, but I knew not the hour until I heard the bell, where I was fishing."

"Art thou prepared, *Roseau tremblante*?" he asked again, addressing her now by the French translation of her Indian name; "art thou prepared to worship the most high God, in penitence of heart and sincerity of spirit?"

"Father!" the girl replied, with a tremulous hesitation that was singularly touching, but she said no more.

"Art thou prepared, I say, daughter, to bow the knee of thy heart before the Lord of all mercies, and ask of him that forgiveness which he alone can grant, and then only to the true penitent?"

"Father, I am prepared—I know my own unworthiness."

"When didst thou confess thyself, my daughter?"

"On Easter-Sunday, father," she replied, again hesitating, and casting down her eyes to the ground, and her cheeks now steeped with burning blushes.

"Not since so long—and wherefore, Ahsahgunushk? Thou wert wont to be truly penitent, daughter, even for small offendings. Wherefore not since so long?"

"Father," returned the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind. "Father, it is that—that—I dare not."

"Dare not!—you dare not confess?" he replied severely, in his slowest and most solemn tones. "You dare not to confess, Ahsahgunushk?—and how then shall you dare to die? and how know that this very day, nay, that this very hour, He shall not require your soul of you, to whom you dare not confess? Of what so great sins are you guilty, that you should not repent them, and confess, and be forgiven?"

"Oh, very, very guilty! Pardon me, father, pardon me!" and she again knelt at his feet, and strove to clasp his knees, burying her head in her lap as she did so, and bursting into a flood of tears of humiliation, and an agony of self-abasement.

"It is not for me to pardon—only to pronounce the pardon of Him who is in all, and through all, and over all, unto those who repent them truly of their sins past, and intend steadfastly to lead a new life." And he drew back from her half-extended arms as he spoke, adding—"Touch me not, daughter, for I fear that thou art corrupt of heart, and that thy touch is of pol-

lution. But, hear me, go thy way into the church, and pray for strength and succor from above. To-morrow morning, which is Sunday, I shall be in the chair, and see thou come to confessional, so shall I set thee penance for thine ill-doings, if that they deserve it, and grant thee absolution of thy sins."

"Oh, no, no, father! I can not," she exclaimed amid an agony of passionate weeping. Oh, no, no, no—I can not—I can not."

"Canst not confess, Ahsahgunushk—and wherefore—wherefore—what crime couldst thou have done so terrible that thou must needs despair?"

"Not that," she faltered—"not that, father. I could—I could perhaps confess but—not—not—in short, not to thee!"

"Not to me!" exclaimed the father Borromeè starting backward, "and wherefore, I prithee, not to me? Why it is to me that you came for admission to the fold of Christ the Savior! It is I, who prepared you for your first sacrament, I who have absolved you ever of your failings and errors, for hitherto your sins have been but venial—and, even now, I trust that I shall not lack the power to console you, and absolve you of this your evil doing, be it what it may. Only come, come, I command you, as you would save your soul alive, come to the confessional to-morrow morning."

And with the words he turned on his heel, without uttering another word, and strode away silent and austere, to robe himself in clerical vestments, put on above his forest costume, in order to minister at the altar, the only altar to the true God in thousand miles of breadth of wilderness, and lake and river.

The maiden followed him silently, with her large dark eyes swimming in tears, yet fixed upon his commanding form, like pure stars shining through the mists which may dim, but can not obliterate their spiritual lustre. Passing beneath the arch into the corridor of the mission-house, she turned short to the

right, and stood within the precincts of the chapel, a large rustic building erected, it is true, from the perishable materials of the forest only, but in the pointed Gothic style, the groined arches being composed of the gnarled and fantastic knees of gigantic oaks, and the columns of knotted shafts of heaven-aspiring pines, all wearing the natural colors of the timber, unpainted and aspiring to no decoration beyond the ruggedly-symmetrical forms in which they had been arranged by the master-hand of one who had not studied architecture for mean end or little purpose. At the entrance stood a vessel containing holy water, and at the farther end was an altar, with an ascent of six broad steps, and a wooden railing, above which was seen the scanty sacramental plate, duly arranged on the board, and several candelabra furnished with candles manufactured from the wax of the wild-bee by the hands of the fathers themselves within the walls of the mission. Not far from the altar stood a pulpit of form so graceful, that it atoned for the simplicity and rudeness of the material, and above the sacramental-table towered on a huge cross of ebony, the semblance of Him crucified, exquisitely carved in ivory; this sacred effigy, together with the sacramental-plate, being the only articles of foreign character discoverable in that foreign sanctuary.

Within its humble walls were associated all the members of the order, and most of the Christian Indians, for it was the usage of the fathers to commence every day with a brief service, at which they required the presence of all the neophytes, unless for especial reasons shown wherefore they should absent themselves, and morning after morning, whether the burning sun of July was scourging the tree-tops with his intolerable lustre, or the deep snows of December lay spotless over miles and miles of untrodden wilderness, the sounds of their matin-bell, hailing the advent of the happy dawn, and summoning the

artless worshippers to greet the Giver of all good with their unpretending orisons. Nearly a hundred Indians were collected, mostly old men, or girls and women, for the chiefs were principally absent fishing for the great salmon of the lakes, and the delicious white-fish, which were beginning to run in toward the shores and shallows about the river mouths, and on which the community in a great degree depended for their winter subsistence. And orderly they sat and attentive, with their dark serious eyes fixed wistfully on the face of the ministering priests, accurately performing all the signs and ceremonials of the ritual, crossing themselves and making the accustomed genuflexions, and even uplifting their sweet and silvery voices to join the chanted hymns and litanies, but of course unable to comprehend a word of the services, which were couched in an unknown tongue. The brief services were, however, soon completed, and then the Father Borromeè, ascending the pulpit, preached a short, lucid, and eloquent, because fervent, direct, and clearly comprehensible sermon, in the French language, to as attentive an audience as ever listened to the words of holy writ from the mouth of mortal man. He had taken as his text the words—"Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden," and his discourse was not an apology for the use of the confessional, but a direct and forcible argument in behalf of its necessity, ending with a striking and almost sublime peroration, inviting, commanding, imploring all those who would not slight and impiously reject the gift inestimable gift of the dying Redeemer, even the gift of his own divine life, draw near and confess, meekly kneeling upon their knees, the sins of which, being human, they must necessarily have committed, and to receive that absolution and forgiveness which should fit them for eternal life.

Many an eye of those who listened to his eager and solicitous appeal, for he appeared this morning singularly and as

it were personally earnest in enforcing his doctrines, was wet with tears of genuine and sincere penitence for slight and venial offences, and many a heart was moved to an earnest renunciation of some familiar and favorite sin, for his words were of that order that pierce the sick heart through the ear, and speak with abiding force to all those who listen in humility, eager to be convinced, through faith, unto salvation. But there was one soul through the very depths of which every word, every accent of that deep voice thrilled with a strange and supernatural power; there was one eye, which, though downcast and humbly fixed on vacancy, discerned every change of the dark expressive features of the speaker, read the most secret thoughts of his heart, felt that his deep, calm, penetrating eye was fixed upon herself, and knew that however he might be in appearance preaching to each and all of his little congregation, every word was, indeed, addressed to herself, every exhortation pointed at her, every thought suggested by the conversation which they had held together but a little while before—that was the girl Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, or the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind; and, indeed, like a very reed she was shaken and distracted by the contending winds of passion and devotion, of human wishes and holier aspirations. “And can it be,” she thought within herself, “can it be that he believes me so sinful, or am I, indeed, sinful, and is this hopeless love, this settled, this devoted, this unselfish, fixed affection, which never may be gratified; is this—is this, indeed, a sin. Oh! that he knew, oh! that he knew, once for all, that which is in this poor, faint heart of mine. For he is good, and he would pity—he is wise, and he could guide; and yet, and yet, how can I ever tell him—he can be so stern to the obstinately sinful; and oh! but this sad love of mine is very, very obstinate. How shall I ever tell him. “*O mon bon Dieu,*” she cried aloud, as her thoughts, her fears, her im-

agination, overpowered her; "*O mon bon Dieu, aidez moi, car je suis faible, car je suis faible, car je tombe. O mon bon Dieu, aidez moi, sauvez moi, pardonnez moi, miserable que je suis !*"

And the deep voice of the preacher took up her words as she uttered them, seemingly unconscious that he had been interrupted, thus bringing it for the first time to her mind that she had cried out in the bitterness of her soul before the whole congregation. "*O bon Dieu ! aidez nous, sauvez nous, pardonnez nous, miserables que nous sommes, pecheurs, et indignes, pardonnez nous ; au nom du fils bien chéri, au nom du Saint-Esprit, pardonnez, pardonnez, et sauvez — Amen ! Amen !*"

The words sunk deep into the wounded spirit of the girl, and she believed for a moment that he penetrated her secret, that he had fathomed the abysses of her obstinate and rebellious heart, that he understood, pitied, prayed for her. Yet never was she under the influence of a more unfounded fancy. She had been rather a favorite of the Jesuit from the first, her singular innocence and artlessness, the confidence with which she had accepted his ministry, her simple and ingenuous faith, and her remarkable readiness in acquiring the tongues of Europe, which she had literally caught on the wing as they fell from his fluent lips, had all attracted his attention and pleased his imagination. She was his first convert, too, of that wild tribe, so that he regarded her not only as an innocent and spotless lamb rescued by his agency from the fangs of the devouring wolf, but felt toward her something of the feeling which dwells in the breast of a young mother toward a first-born child.

Her rare beauty, too, though he was ignorant of its effect, and would have shrunk back in horror could he have even dreamed that the short-lived comeliness of flesh and blood could influence his imagination, or win anything of his favor,

had probably not failed of its wonted attraction; and he confessed even to himself that her sweet, low voice—the voices of most Indian women, while young, are liquid and melodious, but Ahsahgunushk's was so even to the wonder of the tribe—found a responsive chord in his memory, or his fancy—he would not admit even to himself that he had a heart—and transported him to days long past, and scenes long unvisited, but never to be forgotten.

If, however, the maiden erred in supposing that the causes of her agitation, her absenting herself from the confessional, her tears and self-reproaches were understood or suspected by the father, she deceived herself yet more blindly when she supposed that they had escaped the eyes of another. And yet, when she arose from her knees at the conclusion of the service, and found the keen, hawk-like glance of the Bald-Eagle riveted with a meaning expression, half fierce, half fond, yet either way, most repulsive, upon her shrinking form and conscious features, she shuddered with a sort of half-prophetic terror, and endeavored so to mingle herself with the other girls, as to escape his notice.

If such, however, was her intention, it was frustrated, for as she passed out of the gateway into the garden, a hand was laid firmly, though not forcibly, upon her shoulder, and as she started, and instinctively endeavored to free herself from the grasp, the deep voice of the Indian, suppressed into its gentlest tones, fell upon her ear ungraciously, and conveying nothing either of confidence or of gratification on its tones.

“Be not frightened, Ahsahgunushk,” it said, “it is only I—the Bald-Eagle of the Iroquois. I, who am your friend, and the son of your-father”—for, when captured, almost in her infancy, from her own tribe, the Ojibwas, whom the whites called Chippewas, she had been adopted by the great war-chief of the Hurons, the War-Eagle, and had been brought up in

his wigwam as if she had been his daughter. "Come this way," he continued, waving his hand through the garden toward the ravine and the woodland beyond it. "Come this way, the Bald-Eagle would hold council with the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind."

The girl trembled with ill-repressed aversion, and could scarcely conceal her reluctance, although the Bald-Eagle was both a well-formed and handsome Indian, whom any girl of his tribe would have gladly enlisted among her admirers, and, besides being the oldest son of the great chief and the successor to all his hereditary honors, was celebrated as the best hunter and the bravest warrior of the Iroquois of the lakes. He did not, therefore, suspect for a moment that she could have any repugnance to himself unless as connected with a preference for another, and who that other was, he doubted if he did not actually suspect. He was a man, however, of violent passions and strong impulses, of an energetic will, and of a resolute, unbending, and self-confident spirit. No one, therefore, could be less likely to yield his pretensions to an imaginary rival, or to shrink from the fanciful fear of meeting a repulse, from making his wishes known to one over whom in the vain audacity of his soul he conceived that his slightest wish ought to have the influence of a law.

The girl, however, who was only annoyed, and not in the least degree intimidated or overawed by one who could have no influence over such a mind as hers, except that which may be produced by the reality of physical superiority and the reputation of manly courage over the less active spirit of the woman, replied simply, "No, not that way. Let us take the canoe, we will speak in it, on the river, where no one shall hear what the Bald-Eagle wishes with his sister."

"Not sister!" replied the chief, abruptly. "Do n't say that. Not sister, I tell you. Ojibwa girl not sister to the Bald-

Eagle of the Iroquois. Sister—no, never. Wife sometime, maybe.”

In the meantime, the girl had stepped down the bank, and taken her place in the stern of the canoe, paddle in hand, and, although she distinctly heard the last words which the youthful warrior uttered, she affected not to perceive or comprehend his meaning, but motioned him to take his seat facing her, near the head of the slight bark, and sent it out into the middle of the stream by a dexterous sweep of her paddle.

Then turning her face full upon him, and fixing him with her full, bright, calm eyes, she asked him, in a steady voice, in the Iroquois tongue,

“What does the Bald-Eagle wish?”

“The Bald-Eagle,” replied the young man, “is alone. His lodge is empty. The Bald-Eagle has plenty of venison, plenty fish, plenty duck—the Bald-Eagle is a great hunter, his arrow never misses, his spear is death to the salmon—he has plenty of skins, plenty cloth of the pale faces, plenty of wampum—but he has got no squaw. His lodge is very empty, his heart is very lonely—the Bald-Eagle wishes a wife.”

“Why not take wife, then?” said the girl, blushing at his words, yet still affecting to misunderstand him. “Plenty young Huron girl wish husband, plenty good girl, plenty handsome. Why not take Iroquois girl for wife, Bald-Eagle?”

“Iroquois girl not good, not handsome,” answered the warrior. “Ojibwa girl better. Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, she wife good for Bald-Eagle.”

“Not wife, only sister,” she replied, quietly. “Grow up with young chief in same lodge, they papoose together, children together. Brother, sister—not good marry sister. No, no, not wife, Bald-Eagle, only sister.”

Fire flashed from the dark eyes of the Iroquois chief, as he heard her reply, and he clinched his hands vehemently; for

he fully understood her meaning, and almost as fully comprehended the inutility of contending against her gentle but assured will, or endeavoring to alter her purpose. But knowing that violence and rage would be only worse than useless, he made a great effort, and subduing his fierce temper, replied in a voice as quiet as that in which he had commenced his wooing.

"Not true," he said. "One father, one mother make brother, make sister. My father, War-Eagle, of the Iroquois, my mother, 'Mist-of-the-Lakes.' Ahsahgunushk's father, Chingwauk, of the Ojibwas, he call White-Pine, great chief, too; mother, Ojibwa squaw, maybe. Not brother, not sister at all. I say not sister. The Bald-Eagle's lodge waits for the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind. The Bald-Eagle thinks of her when he is alone in the woods on the deer-stand; he sees her face in the clear waters, when he should look for the hamaycush, the great salmon of the lakes; he hears her voice on the winds of heaven, when he should listen 'Awunk' of the geese in the clouds; he dreams of her when he is alone in his wigwam by night. He loves Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng more than all the girls of the Iroquois, more than all the daughters of the pale faces down at the Isle Jesus.* Ojibwa girl best of all, handsomest, most loved. Ojibwa girl be the wife of the Bald-Eagle."

"Bald-Eagle," answered the maiden, calmly and kindly, "I have heard your words, and marked them. Now hear mine, and believe them, for they are true."

"Good," replied the chief. "Will hear—will believe—only say 'yes;' will love, and take to wigwam."

"The Bald-Eagle is a great warrior, a great chief. His arm is very strong in the chase, very strong in the battle. He can bend his enemies for his pride, he can bend the wild beasts

* Montreal.

of the forest for his sport, he can bend the trees of the wood for his pleasure, but he can not bend the heart of a young girl, he can only break it. Hark you, Bald-Eagle, a great chief and warrior should not lead an unwilling bride to his wigwam. A bride's eyes should look forward always, never look backward. A bride's eyes should be blind to the face of her father, her ears should be deaf to the calling of her mother. She should see nothing, hear nothing, think of nothing, but her husband. Bald-Eagle, the eyes of Ahsahgunushk look back always, look forward not at all. She sees only gray hairs—only the gray hairs of Chingwauk, the great chief of the Ojibwas. She hears only a thin voice, only a thin, old, sorrowful voice; it is the voice of her mother calling the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind—calling to her to return to the hunting-ground of the Ojibwas. Bald-Eagle, her eyes are so full of the past that she can not see the present, can not see the future. Her eyes are so full of tears," and in truth they did fill and overflow as she uttered the words, "so full of tears that she can not see the face of the young warrior—her ears are stopped up by the calling of her mother that she can not hear the voice of the young brave. His form may be comely to the sight of others, but it is not comely to the sight of Ahsahgunushk. His voice may sound pleasant to the hearing of others, but it is not pleasant to the ears of Ahsahgunushk. She can not be the wife of Bald-Eagle. I have spoken."

The young man glared at her with a vacant eye, and blank expression for a moment, as if he had not clearly comprehended what she said. But a minute afterward the blood came hotly and fiercely to his cheek, his lip curled scornfully, his eye flashed with a vengeful and malignant fire.

"It is a lie!" he said, not passionately but sullenly, resolutely; and as he spoke his features again became impassive as they had been before he heard her. "I have heard a

voice," he continued, "but it was a lying voice—a voice very bad, very forked, even as the tongue of the rattlesnake that lies among the rocks—a bad, lying voice. Her eyes do not look backward, they look forward. Her eyes do not see the face of Chingwouk, nor do her ears hear the voice of her Ojibwa mother. If her heart is not in the wigwam of the Bald-Eagle, neither is it in the far away hunting-grounds of the Ojibwa. If her eyes can not see the form, neither her ears hear the voice of the Bald-Eagle, neither are they blinded by tears for the Ojibwa, nor stopped up by the callings of her mother. If the Bald-Eagle be not comely to her sight, nor his voice pleasant to her ear, it is because the face of another is dearer, and the voice of another sounds sweeter. If she will not enter the wigwam of the Bald-Eagle, it is because she would enter the wooden house of the pale-faces. If she will not be the wife of the Bald-Eagle, it is because she would be the wife of the priest—the young priest of the pale-faces."

As he uttered the last words in a deep, hissing, guttural voice, his face livid with disappointed pride and envious spite, and his fine form literally convulsed with fury, she met his fierce glare with a calm, equable, and unmoved look, nor did she even blush; for the very intensity of her emotions acted to prevent the outward manifestation of them; and the shock which she experienced at discovering that the most sacred secret of her soul, unconfessed even to her own inmost thoughts, her silent, hopeless, passionless devotion, had escaped her custody, that it had been seen by profane eyes, and spoken of by lips unfriendly and unsanctified, acted upon her system with such violence as at the same time to stun her nerves, and to strengthen her moral courage, and she made answer in a calm voice, and with a firm and unmoved countenance.

"Forbear! Priests have no wives. You speak with a false

tongue. Why are you so bad—why are you so false—why are you so cruel? If she wished it, and *he* wished it likewise, the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind *could* not be the wife of the young priest of the pale faces.”

“And if she could, she should not,” retorted the vehement and enraged warrior. “She shall not! She shall not! while there is strength in the arm, and blood in the veins, and hatred in the heart of the Bald-Eagle, she *shall* not be the wife of the lying priest. My heart is very hard, my will is very strong. I have spoken.”

“Go, leave me. You are bad,” cried the girl, actually shivering through her whole frame with an irrepressible motion of disgust and abhorrence. “That not the way for chief to speak to girl. Do you think so to win heart, to get good thoughts, to buy love? I tell you not so, not so. That the way to make young girl fear—no, not fear! Ojibwa girl fears nothing—but hate, loathe, despise—yes, despise—make, Ojibwa girl despise you—you, great, brave chief of the Iroquois—despise you, Bald-Eagle.”

“The Ojibwas are dogs,” answered the Huron warrior, savagely. “Their women are she-dogs. They are not fit to be the wives of warriors, or the mothers of braves. They are good only to hoe corn, and carry water for the pale-faces. To sit upon the knees of pale priests by the fire, and to kiss their lips, and be their cast-aways. The Ojibwa girls are she-dogs, that whine for the dogs of the pale-faces. Wagh! I spit upon them—they are unchaste she-dogs.”

The maiden’s face flushed crimson at the insult, and her beautiful soft eyes seemed literally to flash living fire, as she turned short upon the taunter.

“You coward!” she exclaimed, with vehement and passionate indignation. “I say you coward, Bald-Eagle, to speak such words to a good girl. You coward, not warrior—you

liar, not chief. You Iroquois, I say, not Ojibwa. Go, go, Ojibwa girl hate now—Iroquois girl shall hate soon, when I tell them. All tribe shall hate—old chief, old squaw, young warriors, young girls, all shall hate, all despise you?”

Goaded almost to madness by her vehement and indignant reproaches, the Bald-Eagle rose to his feet, and passing with a light and even foot down the canoe to the place where she sat, still swelling with violent emotion, and more beautiful for the very anger that warmed her into such impetuous life, and grasping her tightly by the slender wrist, raised his right hand and smote her with his open palm once, and again across the cheek so forcibly as to leave the score of his fingers impressed on the delicate and tender flesh.

A loud shout from the bank whereon several of the lay brothers were assembled, and yet a shriller cry of indignation from the Huron girls on the opposite shore, evinced the indignation which his cowardly act had excited; but ere there was time to mark the effect on his mind, she cast him from her with such energy that he lost his balance, and as the fragile canoe swayed with the motion, fell headlong overboard in the deep water; while with a bitter, scornful laugh, she dipped her paddle into the current, and steered swiftly back to the wharf of the Jesuit Mission.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFESSION.

ANGRY and vehement indignation possessed the mind of the Ojibwa girl, as she came ashore at the dock from which she had so recently departed, and received the warmest expression of sympathy from the lay-brothers of the order, who had seen the outrage committed, and who, notwithstanding that they well knew the inferior position which was occupied by women in the Indian tribes, and the slight estimation in which they were held, could not overlook, or behold, save with indignant eyes and wounded feelings, anything so gross and unmanly as a heavy blow dealt by a powerful warrior against a delicate and fragile girl. Ahsahgunushk, moreover, was a general favorite in the Mission. Her beauty, her gentleness and intelligence, had won for her the regard and esteem of all, even of the grave and abstracted elders, while among the younger, and especially the lay companions of the society, she was looked upon with a warmer and more human feeling, and there were probably many among them, even of gentle birth from Normandy, Touraine, and the soft Mediterranean shores of France, who would willingly have overlooked the dark complexion of the Indian maid, and, in their voluntary isolation from the charms of the fairer females of their own race, would have gladly, too gladly, taken her to be a sharer of the toils, and a consoler of the tedium of the wilderness.

There was, however, at all times, a tranquil and dignified reserve evinced by the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind, which had kept all her admirers somewhat at a distance, a calm and un-

suspecting coldness in her manner of receiving their compliments and courtesy, as if they were either mere jests, or civilities due to her rank and position, which had deterred them from making advances, which, gay and light-hearted and self-confident as these young Frenchmen were, in common with most of their countrymen, they could yet understand it to be doubtful whether she would receive with favor.

Her eyes were very bright, as she landed, and gleaming with wounded pride, and a keen sense of the degradation, which had been inflicted on her by that blow, given in the presence of the white men, who abhorred and repressed to the utmost of their ability the servitude and ignominious station which was inflicted on the wives of the aborigines. Nor, although it was no uncommon thing for an Indian to inflict personal chastisement on an offending wife, nor by any means considered degrading either to the recipient or the inflicter of the punishment, was it usual or decorous, or indeed allowable for a chief even of the highest caste and distinction, to strike a maiden, especially if she were the daughter of a chief and of a time-honored race.

Making her way rapidly through the sympathizing and attentive group, with a burning cheek, on which the marks of that coward blow was still visible, and a downcast eye, answering their remarks of sympathy, and their offers of prompt redress, by monosyllables only, she took her way toward the fort, with the intention, at first, of repairing immediately to Father Borromeè, and of laying her heart open to him, and demanding his protection and support against her savage wooer. Before she reached the gate, however, a change came over the current of her thoughts, she hesitated, paused, and finally turned off into a side alley or avenue of the garden, screened from view by an espalier of trained fruit-trees, and over-arched by the luxuriant tendrils of the vine. As the first eager sense of wrong and anger began to subside in her bosom, the memory of her late

interview with the Jesuit, the consciousness of her own helpless passion, the shame of knowing that her secret had been penetrated by another, and the agonizing fear that it might also have been discovered by the object, came home to her heart with sudden and terrible distinctness. The revulsion was instant and overpowering, and she felt that he, to whom by a natural impulse she had intended to disclose her wrongs, was the very last person living to whom she could speak freely on such a subject, without revealing her secret, even if at this time it was not already revealed to him, from whom she would have most desired to hide it.

Then this reflection suggested yet another train of thought, and she began to ponder deeply on the confessional, which she had been enjoined to attend on the morrow ; on the secret—the guilty secret as she half believed it, which she would be compelled to relate with her own trembling lips, to his astonished and perhaps indignant ears, whom it concerned the most : and to wonder how she should ever find courage for the task, or arrange her thoughts, and frame her words to syllable a confession so humiliating to pure and delicately-minded woman, as the avowal, that she had given her love, not only unsought, but where it could not be accepted even when freely tendered, where it would perhaps be regarded as a sinful and heathenish artifice, perhaps be cast back upon her with disgust and rejected with disdain.

Fuller and fuller waxed the overburdened heart, anger and indignation vanished in an instant, swept away by the full tide of despairing love, of maiden baseness, of shame, of terror, and of deep, desperate self-abasement. The tears swelled fast and silent to her large dark eyes, and overflowed her burning cheeks, and abandoning at once the idea of appealing to any earthly comforter, or seeking any protection or redress from the friendship of mortal man, she hurried away with fleet, shy

footsteps, to a thick, shadowy arbor, all overrun with wild vines, creeping plants, ivy, and clematis, at the end of the garden abutting on the forest, and there casting herself on her knees and burying her face in her hands, wept bitterly and passionately, while she prayed fervently for succor and for strength, to Him, whom she had loved to worship with a sincere and earnest, though an ignorant and half-superstitious devotion.

Slowly the morning lagged away over the aching head and throbbing heart of the Ojibwa girl, who still knelt sad and lonely in the dim bower, battling with her undisciplined heart, and untamed though innocent affections, while things were passing in the fort concerning in the last degree the happiness of her future, which, had she suspected them, would have added yet wilder anguish to a sorrow, which surely needed no addition.

Scarcely had the Bald-Eagle emerged from the water than he swam straight across to the Indian shore, and making his way in obdurate and haughty silence through the company of Huron girls, who gazed at him with eyes eloquent of tranquil reproach, and now and then muttered a word of sarcasm or direct reproach, he entered his own lodge in a mood the most fiendish—for in that mood were concentrated the disappointment of a baffled man, the rancorous spite of a jealous man, the irritated and embittered vanity of a proud and haughty man, the selfish and stern persistence of an obstinate man, and the deadly and unforgiving hatred of a pitiless, cold-blooded, remorseless man, fancying himself wronged, and resolute to gain his ends, whether by force or fraud, and to be at once gratified in his passions, and satiated in his thirst for vengeance.

After remaining in this mood, alone in his lodge, for something better than an hour, he made his appearance again without; having changed his garments, saturated by the cold waters of the Wye, and clad himself in his full and ceremonial attire

as the war-chief of his tribe. He was fully armed, too, with knife and tomahawk of French manufacture, with his bow in its case, and his quiver full of arrows at his side, and his long-barrelled, smooth-bored gun in his right hand, while his bullet-pouch and powder-horn were slung across his shoulders.

Thus equipped and accoutred, he took his place in the stern of his own canoe, and with half-a-dozen strokes of the paddle set her across the narrow river, made her fast at the shore, and walked slowly with a dogged and sullen air, and a firm, haughty, and insolent carriage, to the entrance into the fort, passing as he went several of the lay brothers, who had witnessed his treatment of the girl, and who now looked up from the tasks about which they were all variously employed, to stare at him with abhorrent eyes, and to express their disgust and abhorrence of what they termed the brutality and cowardice of the man, in no measured terms of reprobation. None of them, indeed, addressed him directly, probably in their present humor they would have held it derogatory to themselves to do so, but they spoke aloud and distinctly, in both the French and the Iroquois tongues, both of which he perfectly understood ; and they were well assured that no word which fell from their lips escaped him. Yet he gave no token, by either sign or gesture, or by any expression of anger, contempt, or emotion, that he heard or understood them ; but passed onward, cold, impassive, and austere, without changing the position of his head, without turning an eye toward them, without suffering a muscle of his face, to display the furious and revengeful rage which must have been enkindled at his burning and unforgiving heart, by the terms which he heard applied to himself, terms the last usually to be applied, and if applied, the first to be resented by one so proud and arrogant as an Indian chieftain.

On passing through the archway into the interior of the fortress, for no one had questioned or interrupted him as he en-

tered the gate in the stockade, he paused and asked of the porter who was sitting within, cleaning the lock of a harquebuss where he should see the father Borromèe, and his station being well known and recognised, he was instantly ushered into the library, where he whom he sought, was seated alone at a large oaken table, covered with books, manuscripts, and mathematical instruments, preparing a map, as it would seem, of the great Georgian bay, with all its islands, and the northern shores with their net-work of rice lakes, swamps, and noble rivers.

The priest raised his head as the chief entered, and seeing who it was, invited him courteously to be seated, and inquired what he could do to pleasure the Bald-Eagle, speaking to him in the Iroquois dialect, which he used as fluently and even eloquently as his own polished tongue.

"Justice," replied the Indian sternly, refusing the seat which the Jesuit had indicated by a motion of his hand, with a contemptuous gesture. "The Bald-Eagle is a great chief of the Hurons, he asks no pleasure of the sons of Jesus, only justice — only his squaw, and justice.

The priest looked at the man with some astonishment, and with something of rebuke in his manner, for the tone of the Indian was arrogant and disrespectful to say the least, and his air and demeanor bordered on insolence, which the priest, humble as he was by profession if not by practice, was one singularly unlikely to endure. He had the rare art, however, to repress every outward indication of internal emotion, and to preserve an impassive and inscrutable countenance under all circumstances of anger, surprise, or apprehension, and he now looked at his guest steadily and with an inquiring eye, but manifested neither wonder nor resentment.

"In what does the Bald-Eagle require justice, or against whom?" he asked at length, "and who is the squaw of the Huron chief? — I knew not that he was wedded."

"Not wedded," replied the dark savage sullenly. "That it — want be wedded — want justice, want squaw. What for pale-face want Indian girl? — What for priest want Ojibwa maiden? Priest not wed any how — priest not have wife — what for not give Bald-Eagle his own squaw."

"You must speak plainly, chief," answered the Jesuit coldly, "if you wish a reply; much more if you want assistance, or, as you say, justice. I have neither the time nor the wish to guess the meaning of riddles, so you must not speak them to me."

"Not speak riddles, tell you," he replied in a fierce tone and with an angry gesture. "Speak truth. Want squaw, I tell you. Want Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng; what for not give her? — what for priest keep her, when can't call wife?" and he burst out into a long, vehement, and rapid speech, detailing his love for the Ojibwa captive, asserting his right to her as the prisoner of his bow and lance, as the adopted daughter of his father's wigwam, demanding that the priest should compel her to become his wife, and should forthwith unite her to him in the bonds of Christian wedlock.

The Jesuit perceived that the Indian was much excited if not enraged, and being entirely ignorant himself and unsuspecting of the attachment with which he had unwillingly and unknowingly inspired the bosom of the maiden, he did not comprehend, or pay any heed to the obscure allusions of the jealous and suspicious chief. He asked, therefore, quietly and in the expectation of receiving an affirmative answer, whether the girl was willing to become his wife, and beginning to believe that he had found a clew to the mystery of her behavior in the interview he had with her in the morning. What was his surprise then, when he received a reply couched in tones of insolent fury, and accompanied by a fierce blow of

the clenched hand on the table, which rang and quivered to the stroke.

"What for ask that, when *know*?" he shouted. "Know that she *not* willing—know that make her himself not willing—what for priest ask lie-question?"

"How dare you, sirrah," said the Jesuit, his hot Italian blood out-boiling at the insult, and his pale face crimsoning with anger, as he started to his feet, with as much fiery excitement as though he had been still a warrior, "how dare you, sirrah, use such terms to me? You must be mad, or drunken with wine. Begone—quit my presence, nor dare to return hither till you know how to comport yourself toward your superiors."

"How dare?" answered the Indian, glaring at him. "Huron dare anything—yes, anything. Dare kill priest, if priest *dare* take squaw. Not begone at all—not quit presence till speak mind—till speak *all* mind, every bit—till told all truth—till got justice—till got squaw. Superior! Ha! Where Indian chief's superior? Tell that, ha! tell that. Huron chief no superior, only the Great Spirit. How you dare—how you dare, wicked pale-face, how you dare, lying priest, love Ojibwa girl. How you dare make her love you?" and without giving the Jesuit time or opportunity to interrupt him, he poured out a torrent of wild, fierce, impassioned words, explanations, accusations, demands, denunciations, threats, all incoherently and almost incomprehensibly blended. At first, the feelings of the father Borromée were those of pure wrath and indignation, coupled with no idea what could be the origin of this strange conduct and insolent declamation on the part of one who, if he had been somewhat arrogant and haughty in the calm and grave austerity which he pictured to himself as the true mould of dignity, had never before failed of respect, or given way to bursts of impudent aggression; but by degrees

it began to dawn upon his mind that there might be something of meaning, as there was undoubtedly much of method in what he had first regarded as mere madness. He began to recollect many trifles, which he had scarcely observed, and never noted before, in the girl's demeanor; he thought of her unusual perturbation, and the confusion and bashfulness of her manner during their interview that very morning, and above all, at her very palpable objection to confess herself to him who had always before been her chosen director and adviser; and he began most reluctantly and doubtfully to admit to himself that it might be, indeed, that she loved him with the unregulated and artless love of a child of nature, an unschooled daughter of the wilderness.

This doubtful and most painful sensation led him to suppress his indignation at the mode in which the chief addressed him, and, though he felt himself pure and self-acquitted, he was inclined to feel and make allowance also for the disappointment, the jealousy, and the rage of the baffled and rejected suitor, and in some sort to pity rather than to blame the sufferer too severely. To one so acute a reasoner on the motives which sway the human breast, so wise a judge of the actions, so close and correct a scrutinizer of the thoughts of men, it was not difficult to obtain from the passionate and fluent lips of the Huron chief a full recital of all that had occurred between him and the maiden, even to her positive rejection of his suit, and the blow which he had dealt her in the vexation of his spirit. And while he was, indeed, wringing every word, every admission from the unwilling lips of the warrior by dint of the most rigid and ingenious cross-examination, the Indian never entertained a suspicion how completely he was cheated out of his unintended confidence, but fancied that he was heaping coals of fiery retribution on the head of the priest, and confounding him by the revelations of his own villany.

At length he ended, as he had commenced, by a demand that the girl should be immediately compelled, by the censure and authority of the church, to become his wife, willing or unwilling, and united to him in due ceremonial on the following day in presence of the congregation.

To this demand the priest replied at length, but by what was in fact a simple and direct refusal to do what was required, and a positive denial of the existence in himself, or in the church which he represented, of any authority or power, such as should compel a girl to bestow herself in marriage contrary to her own choice and conviction; and though he treated the suspicion that she was moved by any attachment to himself—an attachment of which he spoke, could such a thing be, as corrupt, sinful, adulterous, nay, almost incestuous—as a mere chimera and hallucination of morbid and exaggerated jealousy, though he endeavored with all his powers of eloquence, with all his influence over the spiritual terrors of the half-converted savage, to convince, to soothe, to console him—though he offered sympathy, advice, and aid, though he offered to act as mediator with the maiden, even while he refused positively to exercise any coercion, or even persuasion, it was all in vain. The rage of the Indian was deeply grounded—his suspicions were converted into certainties, and his own alternatives were instant possession of the girl, or vengeance, deep, thorough, and eternal, on all who bore the name, or wore the hue, of Christians and pale-faces. With words such as these, and a glare of the eye that portended deadly mischief, he turned on his heel, and left the Jesuit, who, now roused again to indignation, was rebuking him severely for his perversity and hardness of heart, and threatening him with the terrors of excommunication.

Sullenly, silently he strode back to his canoe, repassed the river, and returning to the village, where he learned that the

Reed-shaken-by-the-wind had not yet returned home, but was believed to be sheltered in the fort of the pale-faces, whither she had been seen to repair, he once more retired to his own lodge, where he proceeded without delay to make all preparations for a hurried departure and long absence from the settlement.

At evening, when the tribesmen and chiefs returned from the chase, the fisheries, and the fields—for many of them, under the teaching of the good Jesuits, had learned something of agriculture, and applied themselves to the cultivation of maize, beans, and other esculent roots or grains—the Bald-Eagle was awaiting them by the council-fire, where, without the slightest allusion to what had passed between himself and the girl, or any allusion to her name, he announced to them his intention of going on a great hunt down the shores of the lake, to be absent for a moon at the least, and perhaps for a yet longer period. Such voyages were not uncommon among the bolder and more adventurous of the tribesmen, so that no wonder was manifested, though several of the younger of the warriors desired permission to accompany him, in pursuit, as they expected, of both sport and profit, if not of honor; the fur-bearing animals were then abundant in those regions, and peltries were already beginning to be an article of considerable value, both for use and for exportation, with the Frenchmen of the provinces lower down the St. Lawrence, with whom a communication was maintained by means of canoes and bateaux, which came up through the inland water-courses of lakes and rivers, interrupted by occasional portages, but extending far to the northward from the mouth of the French river, on the Georgian bay, to that of the great Ottawa river, above a thousand miles below, close to the rising settlement of Montreal.

Companionship such as this would not, however, have suited in the least the views or intentions of the Bald-Eagle, who

contented himself by merely expressing his intention to go alone, and by indicating the inferior chief to whose guidance and direction in the hunts and fisheries he desired his young men to submit themselves. Nor did he depart without instructing his tribesmen to watch over the safety of the good pale-faces, to supply them with a due proportion of the venison, the ducks, the bear's-meat, as well as of the white fish and mamaycush which should fall to the share of the tribe during the latter summer and the autumn.

This done, and all arrangements having been duly made, his largest and best canoe having been newly gummed and fitted out with his fur robes and blankets, his fishing spears, and traps, and implements of all kinds, in addition to his much-prized gun, and culinary apparatus, meager and simple as that was, as well as with a store of parched and unparched corn, sugar, and tobacco, the Bald-Eagle wandered out into the camp, or village, and strayed through it to and fro, as if without any object, but, in truth, with a hope, if it were not with an expectation, that he should learn something of the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind, if he should not succeed in seeing her once more before departing on the journey, which he trusted would result in making her his own for ever.

She did not, however, meet his eye—for, in truth, overpowered with anxiety, and worn-out by the vehemence of her passions, she had sunk gradually from sobbing into sleep within the precincts of that green sequestered arbor, and was now slumbering in the gray gloaming of the summer's evening, forgetful of all her sorrows, and forgotten or neglected alike by all her friends and foes, if she indeed had any of the latter, save the enamored and irritated warrior, whose thoughts dwelt on her altogether, even while his pride prevented him from making any direct inquiries of her presence, or her absence, from the wigwam of his father.

None of the girls of the tribe had seen her, indeed, since she walked directly toward the fort after the indignity which had been offered her, but they all believed her to have sought protection from the insolence of her overbearing lover at the hands of the fathers, and they all rejoiced at the evident annoyance and disappointment of the chief, whose unrequited love for the Ojibwa captive had not escaped their quick-sighted eyes, and whose overbearing demeanor, headstrong temper, and stern rudeness of disposition, had so little endeared him to his tribeswomen, that they were certainly anything rather than annoyed by his unquestionable rage and spite, the causes of which, as well as of his unexpected departure, was no secret to them at least, whatever it might be to the males of their tribe.

In the meantime twilight fell thick and gray; the night-hawks wheeled aloft on balanced wings with their mournful and oft-repeated call; the katydids, those shrill alarars of the west, opened their shrill, sonorous serenade; the frogs commenced their loud, nocturnal concert from the shallow marshes and dank meadow edges; the great owls hooted from the forest-depths, and were answered by the echoes through the breezeless night-air; the myriads of bright fire-flies lighted their amorous torches, and flitted fast and far, now glimmering clearly, now vanishing into thick gloom, over the dewy grass, and among the fragrant underwood; the fishes leaped out of the water at the swarming insects, and fell back with a short splash on the surface; and, ever and anon, the long, melancholy howl of a wolf would rise upon the night, and die away in lugubrious cadences, striking a singular and deep awe into the boldest heart. It was night in the wilderness. The evening-bell of the Mission had rung its last sweet chime, and the long swell of the choral voices had sent up the vesper hymn to the Virgin Mother from the wood-girded sanctuary. The stars came out thick and bright, like diamond-gems set in

the dark azure canopy of the summer night, and after a while the broad moon, now approaching to the full, soared up above the verdurous tree-tops, filling the heavens with her serene and holy light, and casting a broad, wavering path of silver adown the middle of the river, enclosed on this hand and on that by the deep, black shadows on the walls of stately ever-greens, which towered up from the margin of the brimful current, so that no human eye could discern which was the limit between the low shore and the level water.

As the light fell upon the bosom of the waters, the canoe of the Bald-Eagle shot out from the shore, and under the noiseless guidance of his well-managed paddle, went down the stream toward the outlet, and, long before the first paly glimmer of the dawn had told of the returning day, was skimming the surface of the broad lake near to the islet-rock known as the giant's grave, leaving no trace of the path he had taken, nor to be seen again by Jesuit or neophyte, till days had run on into weeks, till weeks had become months, and the green robes of the summer forest had been exchanged for the gorgeous purples, the crimsons, and the gold of their autumnal gar-niture.

As the chief's canoe darted away and was lost in the darkness, a change seemed to come over the village; a change of cheerfulness and merriment, for the gay, light-hearted laughter of the happy girls, and now and then a snatch of wild-resounding song, rose up from the neighborhood of the watch-fires, and the joyous shout of playful children, which had been all silenced and held in sullen constraint by the perverse authority and gloomy mood of the war-chief, burst out with redoubled glee, freed from the restraint imposed by his unwelcome presence. He had gone unregretted—and it was evident enough that his return, be it late or early, would meet with no sincere or earnest welcome.

And still in her forest-bower, under the pale lustre of the moon, Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng slept like an innocent and happy flower, folded in the fragrance of her own sweet thoughts, and unguarded, except by His care, who watches ever over the repose of the spotless and the young. All night long she slept dreamless and uninterrupted, until the morning was beginning to grow gray in the east, and one or two of the earliest birds began to chirp and flutter in the branches, then she awoke suddenly, and with something of a start, and even after she was awake she looked around for the moment thoughtfully and doubtfully, as if she were endeavoring to collect herself, and to remember how or wherefore she had passed the night in that unusual and unfrequented spot.

Few minutes sufficed to bring everything that had passed on the previous day to her memory, nor that only, for she remembered somewhat uneasily, that she had the task of confession before her, and while she recoiled, as a delicate and virtuous girl must recoil naturally, from owning that she had granted her love unsolicited, and that she still loved on, not wisely, but too well, and that so she must go on living hopeless of return, until life itself should be over; still, as a sincere and faithful catholic, she never contemplated anything short of confessing the whole undisguised and undistorted truth, believing that otherwise she could not so much even as hope for salvation, and confident that she should receive consolation and pity for weakness, though she looked for no sympathy, and absolution of her sin from her gentle and grave director.

This morning, too, in the pure light of the early dawn, in the soft and gentle air, and in the midst of all sweet rural sounds and sights, apart from any external influences to disturb, or internal emotions to distract her mind, she could think and reason more rationally, and with a clearer judgment of her

duties and her rights, both as a Christian and woman, than she had been able to do when struggling in the first pangs of a newly-comprehended and hopeless attachment, and striving against the haughty and over-mastering will of a being at once powerful and selfish, with whom contention must be difficult, if not altogether vain, and whom she regarded with abhorrence the more settled in proportion to the obstinacy with which he seemed resolved to press on her his odious suit.

Now, therefore, she had neither doubt nor fear, but resolved at once to attend the regular service of the day, to pour out her whole soul in the confessional, to implore the protection of the order against the oppressor of the Iroquois, and if she could avert by no other means that detested union, to devote herself to perpetual celibacy, becoming the bride of heaven, and giving up for ever all vain imaginations, all hopes of the woman's brightest prospect, a happy wedded life, and a serene old age, and peaceful death-bed, amid the quiet tears of affectionate and mournful children.

No sooner had she collected her thoughts, and made up her mind as to the course she would pursue, than she stole rapidly through the dimmest and least-frequented walks to the edge of the river, for she knew not as yet whether the inhabitants of the fort were stirring and the gates open, and she had no desire to call attention to her proceedings, or to be required to reply to any question as to the where or wherefore she had passed that night beyond the precincts of the village, and without her own lodge. But it was too early as yet for her fears to be justified, the dwellers in the mission-house were all still buried in deep sleep, and the girl made her way, unobserved, down to the spot where she had left her canoe, unfastened it from the pile to which she had attached the painter, and paddling rapidly over to the other shore, stole with a foot so light and noiseless among the skin-tents, and wood-built lodges of

the village, that she reached her own wigwam unsuspected, and when an hour or two afterward, when the camp was awakened, and the dim voices were heard once more on the peaceful banks of the Wye, she issued from the door of her dwelling, with her hair neatly dressed, her dress decorously arranged, and her dark skin healthfully glowing after her usual bath in the clear, cold waters of the neighboring river. There was some little hurry and excitement displayed by the Huron girls as they saw their companion, absent as they knew her to have been at the close of night, issue from her dwelling as tranquilly as if she had passed the night therein in customary sleep, but they betrayed no indiscreet curiosity, no uttered remarks even to her, much less to others, which would induce any questions or remarks concerning her disappearance and return. After awhile, however, when they were satisfied that the suspicions of none of the chiefs pointed to the subject of their own surmises, they all began to crowd around her, to inquire into the cause and the meaning of the strange scene which they had observed on board the canoe, and to tell her of the departure of the Bald-Eagle on a long hunting-excursion, which they all attributed unanimously to her peremptory rejection of the young warrior's suit.

The Reed-shaken-by-the-wind replied as slightly and indefinitely as might be; but her surprise and pleasure at the unexpected and welcome departure of the chief, were too great and too sincere to be disguised, much less concealed, and she laughed as heartily and gayly as if she had not spent half the preceding day and night in tears that would not be consoled, when the girls described with faint mimicry the gloomy and sullen disappointment with which the Bald-Eagle had stalked to and fro among the lodges, from dewy eve well-nigh to midnight in search of her, though he had been too cunning to ask any overt questions, and had departed without suffering any one of

the warriors to suspect the reasons of his going, or ascertaining where she was whose repulse had driven him to seek consolation in the wild sports of the woods and waters.

Hope cheerfully dawned in the poor girl's breast as she listened, and she fully believed that between shame at the unmanly part he had played—striking a woman before the eyes of so many witnesses—and mortification at the unfavorable reception of his addresses, he had abandoned the pursuit, and taken this way of showing her that he had withdrawn himself in the capacity of suitor, and she now felt that she could go through the duty to which she had bound herself, not contentedly only, but gratefully, and with a good hope of favorable and happy results. For she was a woman of strong mind and energetic will, and once convinced that her love was hopeless, vain, and unmaidenly, if not actually sinful and impious, she was not one to suffer it to haunt her to her misery and degradation, but to tear it from her heart of hearts, even if the heart-strings must needs break with the shock.

By the time that the few light feminine duties of the day were performed, and the morning-meal prepared and taken, the bell began to announce that it was holyday, and to summon the dusky worshippers to be present at the celebration of high mass in the chapel, whither the brethren were even now congregating; and with their humble offerings, and innocent and happy hearts, the poor Indian maidens hastened to meet their spiritual advisers, and to do homage at the altar of grace.

The service was performed, all shorn of the splendors of its pompous and sublime ceremonial, a few home-made candles only gleaming through the mist of incense collected from the native gums and aromatics of the forest, ministered by no splendidly-attired priests in alt, and cope, and dalmatique, nor harbingered by the glorious swell of sacred music and the deep diapason of the pealing organ, but it was heard by hum-

ble and attentive ears, and garnered up in penitent and trusting hearts ; and it may well be that the little flock gathered from the howling wilderness into the fold of the truth, was found more acceptable in the eyes of the All-seeing than many a wealthier and prouder congregation. After the masses were ended, a few of the warriors and many of the younger girls entered the confessional, and after recounting their simple errors, and rehearsing their half-unconscious doubts, briefly received full absolution. But not till all beside had departed did Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng enter the stall of the penitent, so that no ear heard the deep sobs of shame and anguish with which she rehearsed her sad but sinless tale, or marked the suppressed groans of the strong-minded, energetic man who listened to her artless speech ; but when they issued from the chapel, all saw that the sweet maiden's face was radiant with tranquil peace and serene happiness, while the high features of the Father Borromeè were darker and more gloomy than their wont. That night he kept vigils alone before the cross, and the clang of the self-inflicted scourge was heard above the "*culpa mea*," and the "*ora pro nobis*," and the steps of the high altar reeked red on the morrow with dark blood-gouts from the lacerated flesh of the self-condemned and penitent ascetic, who visited thus grievously upon himself the punishment of his unconscious error, hoping that therefore vengeance would hold aloof from him hereafter, and the atonement be accepted on high.

CHAPTER V.

THE RETURN.

DAYS had coursed onward until they became weeks, weeks had been numbered until months had flown; the deep blue skies of July and August had exchanged their rich azure hue for the soft golden lustre and mellow purple haze of Indian summer; the green leaves of the forest had put on the colors of the rainbow, and reflected in the transparent waters of the lake and its tributaries floated double, reality and semblance indistinguishable. The wild-pigeons had ceased to obscure the sun with the migrations of their countless myriads, the wild ducks had come in by thousands and hundreds of thousands from the northward, and ever and anon in the early gray of the dawning, and among the dank dews falling thick at eventide, the hoarse "hawking" of the innumerable phalanxes of geese might be heard clamoring and clanging amid the clouds as they oared their way through the thin, pallid air, with the slow, circular sweep of their huge pinions, to their warm hibernacula in the sounds and lagoons of the Atlantic waters, and the tepid pools and evergreen morasses of the southern Florida

The Iroquois, their autumnal hunts and fisheries ended, had come in for the most part to the village, and absented themselves now for days only, not for weeks, for the lake was almost continually stirred into wrath by the northwestern gales, and its surface was ploughed up into long, ridgy rollers, bursting and curling their white and foamy caps, and threatening

destruction to stronger and more solidly-built vessels, if less buoyant, than the fragile bark canoes of the Indians.

The wigwams, from the richest to the poorest, were well provided with meat. Deer had been taken in abundance, many bears had been brought in, ducks by hundreds and geese by scores, with salmon-trout and white-fish by the quintal were smoking at the fires of every lodge, even the poorest. The storehouse and garner of the Mission were literally overflowing with the produce of the fields and gardens, blessed this year with abundant crops, and with the flesh and fowl of the forest, and the fish of the great waters, so that they could right easily have braved the coming inclement season, heedless of fresh supplies, not for themselves alone, but for the friendly neophytes, should any chance or improvidence cause them to fall short of provisions during the season of snows, when the lakes are bound with fetters of thick-ribbed ice, and the forest tracts buried in deepest snows, present no inducement to the hunter to brave fatigue and famine in traversing their vacant and inhospitable recesses, for the deer had already for the most part gone southward, and moose and cariboo, the great winter game of the northern wilderness, are not found generally to the west or southward of the great Canadian Ottawa.

In the meantime, all peacefully and happily had the days of summer ebbed away over the heads of the unwarlike, and unambitious Jesuits, all calmly and bounteously had their labors in the earlier seasons been repaid by the abundant ingatherings of the rich autumn. The gardens still wore a gay aspect, for the grapes, golden and purple, still adorned the vines with clusters worthy of *la belle France*, and among the sere leaves of the orchards glanced pippin as lustrous in their tints as the most brilliant of fair Normandy; the land of sparkling cider vats, sacred, above all others, to Pomona. The maize-fields had yielded their abundance, and the great golden pumpkins

had been gathered into the stores and root-houses, ample provision for their stock of domestic animals during the rigors of the approaching winter.

During the latter days many of the younger priests of the order, and all the lay-brethren, as the fields no longer claimed their labors or occupied their time, had given some hours of each morning to the bold and perilous excitement of the chase, which was not to them so much a sport, as a resource for the maintenance of their tables and the clothing of their bodies, and—for they were not, as I have observed, home-keeping and half-emasculated drones, like the dwellers of European convents, but bold, practical, energetic, well-disciplined, equally fitted for the hardships of the wilderness and the intrigues of polished cabinets, or the casuistry of rival churches—great had been their success, and well nigh invaluable their spoils won in the forest. Many a lordly buck had been brought in many-antlered; many a sturdy bear had contributed his massy chine and huge hams to the flesh-pots and salting-tubs, and his robes to the simple but efficient tanneries of the natives, and as the days waned gradually more, and the mornings opened late, and the evenings closed in early, the workshops gave employment, the forge glowed, and the anvils rang, the laboratories had their votaries, the library was crowded with nocturnal students, pouring forth lore of every kind, manuscripts, and plans, and maps; histories, treatises, geology, natural sciences, casuistry, policy, and theology, all finding their several authors, all going to swell the bulk of documents, which should be transmitted to Montreal, and thence across the broad Atlantic, with the departure of the spring caravan of voyageurs and Indians, down the intricate water-courses and over the rugged portages of the lake Nipissing and the roaring rapids of the vast Ottawa. Alas! that it was not so fated.

Nor in the interval of the Bald-Eagle's absence had things

not gone well with the beautiful and bright, now joyous and serene as ever, and as of old the charm of all, and seemingly at least, the happiest of the happy; for from the day which had seen the departure of the young chief, and the confession of her hopeless passion to the well-regulated and self-restrained director of her conscience, she had felt herself liberated from the persecution she had endured from the young Iroquois, had ceased to brood over a passion half-imaginative and dangerous only because it had been indulged and brooded over in silence and solitude, and had so far at least eradicated it, that she felt no warmer emotion toward her grave and pure-minded adviser, than a child might feel toward a gentle and indulgent father, or a much younger sister to a kind and devoted brother. And he, as soon as he perceived that the mind of the maiden was not really diseased, but only lightly touched by thick-coming fancies, and emotions proceeded from a stricken imagination rather than from a wounded heart, had demeaned himself toward her with so much quiet skill in the treatment of human affections, not appearing to avoid her or to consider that there was anything wrong, but seeming to consider the whole rather at an end so soon as it was confessed and absolution granted, and bore himself so paternally, so gravely, and yet so benignantly, that what might by a different line of conduct have been exaggerated into a baneful, sinful, and unconquerable passion, speedily declined into a pure, a genial, and a hallowed affection, even as the fiery glow and consuming heat of a mid-summer's noon, mellows and melts away into the soft and delicious warmth of tranquil dewy eve, with the crescent moon and holiest evening star replacing the intense and sultry day-god.

And in their self-denial and self-conquest, both were happy, he in his priestly wisdom and manly virtue, she in her innocence and maiden purity. Both had been tempted in some

sort, both had striven against the tempter, both had conquered, and met each one the appropriate and sure reward which never fails to follow self-resistance and self-conquest, the balm of a tranquil spirit, the blessed consolation of a self-approving and self-gratulating heart.

On a fitting opportunity, so soon as he perceived that she was seriously and sincerely struggling with herself, he had related to her much, more perhaps than he had ever done to any human being, of the trials, the sorrows, the agonies, the temptations, and the triumph of his past life. How he had won fame and wealth, high name and rank on the battle-field, only to lavish them on one, the fairest of her sex, but, alas! almost the frailest; how she had been his own—all, as he vainly dreamed, his own—for a few short months of perfect bliss and rapture; how she had fallen from the way of virtue, and become the merest castaway; how in disgust and disappointment he had taken up the cross of Christ, and borne it faithfully, until the seed sown in bitterness and misery bore good fruit unto righteousness; how in after-days *she* came to him a penitent, unknowing that he to whom she came imploring heavenly pardon, had himself so much to forgive; and how it was the happiest moment of an unhappy life, when he could believe her reconciled to man and to God, and pronounce her absolution with an undoubting heart. She died, and his love which had never faltered, though imperious honor forbade him to indulge or display it, slept beside her in the grave of the repentant sinner, illumining her memory and gilding her ashes, like sunshine on a nameless monument. He told her how, in after-days, it was his happy lot to fall in with the destroyer of his love, his honor, of all but his virtue and his reason, depressed as he was depraved, deep sunk in misery as in crime; how when vengeance was easy alike and certain, unrecognised himself he recognised his mortal foe, relieved his

wants, consoled his parting agonies, and abstained even from heaping the coals upon his guilty head, by whispering, "Lo! I am he, whom thou didst rob of all that made life happy," but suffered him in charity to pass away, supposing his kind benefactor to be but another good Samaritan, who had ministered to his necessities, and little suspecting that he was one who might be regarded as the avenger of blood, soothing the death-bed of his heart's murderer.

She wept as the father calmly recited the tale of his own grievous sorrows, and as she perceived how bitter they had been as compared with her own, and how light, in truth, were her own annoyances and trials, she could not persist in obstinate and sullen grief, even had she been more inclined than she indeed was to perversity of temper, but giving herself up entirely to the strengthening influence of his right admonitions, she took to herself fortitude with humility, and resignation with hope, and soon and with little difficulty subdued her own heart, and was once more as single-hearted and serene a maiden as any within the sound of the silver bell of the Jesuits.

Touched by her docile, moreover, and deeply moved by the earnest and enthusiastic will and spirit which lay concealed under an exterior so artless, so affectionate and child-like, the father Borromée had promised her, that in case of the return of the Bald-Eagle, and the renewal on his part of attempt to coerce or terrify her into an unwilling marriage, he would use his influence with the elder chiefs of the tribe to prevent the consummation of sacrifice, and should remonstrance and rebuke prove ineffectual, that he would himself take her under his protection, and set his absolute veto on the unpermitted contract; and calmed instantly by that promise she recovered all her wonted cheer and merry lightness of heart, for of a truth she believed his will to be irresistible, his authority over the greatest chiefs of the most puissant tribes undoubted; and

his power but little inferior to that of the omnipotent and omnipresent Ruler, whose majesty and mightiness his eloquent words had proclaimed to the people, and whose delegated authority he seemed to sway with a will so serene and steady, a fortitude so perfect, and a benevolence so God-like. And doubtless, when he promised, he believed himself certain of ability to perform, nor doubted that his power was as absolute over the minds and tempers of his Indians in matters temporal, as it was over their souls in things spiritual.

Father Borromèe, it must be remembered, was not the superior of the establishment by rank or by seniority, though in all respects as regarded the governance of men's minds, the practical affairs of the order, the domestic and political economy of the mission, he was by far more eminently qualified than the actual president, a much older man, deeply versed in the lore and the tactics of the cloister, an able casuist, a subtle theologian, and an apt, courtier-like, soft-mannered politician of courts and cabinets; and, with the rare skill which the Jesuits invariably brought to bear on all worldly matters, this fact was at once acknowledged, and the whole practical and physical management of the missions was attributed to and performed by Father Borromèe, who had therefore come to be regarded by the Indians as in truth the great man; while the real president, living in abstraction and apart, dealing more with books than with men, often employed in abstruse sciences, which they regarded as magical, both in their causes and effects, never taking any part in either the labors of the field or the toils of the chase, and never, in fact, descending upon the scene at all, *nisi dignus vindice nodus*, was looked upon almost as a supernatural being, and supposed by some to be a direct emanation from and representative of the Great Spirit.

Such was the position of affairs at the fort, and such the circumstances of the various personages, when, in the last

days of October, without its being asserted that any one had seen him or fallen in with his tracks, or with any signs of his presence, it began to be whispered among the Indians that the Bald-Eagle was in the neighborhood; and what seemed strange, the rumor was coupled to a singular and unusual sort of excitement, not apparently unmingled with some sort of blind apprehension, which might well degenerate into some panic terror.

This rumor coming to the ears of Father Borromée, he called some of the elder chiefs to council, and finding that the tribe had been preparing their arms, and had even gone so far as to post sentinels on several occasions, he applied himself earnestly to inquire into the causes of their belief of the Bald-Eagle's presence in the vicinity, and yet more, of their seemingly unaccountable apprehension of peril, since it was certain that no hostile Indian tribe had their hunting-grounds, or any permanent place of residence within a hundred leagues at least of the fort on the Wye. Still, however, strange as it seemed and fanciful, and altogether improbable that anything of the kind should be brewing, the Jesuit was so well aware of the singular combination of superstition and shrewdness, which exists in the Indian character, and of their marvellous instinctive faculty of foreseeing events ere they come to pass—the result, doubtless, of some inductive and reasoning process, starting from certain facts known to themselves, and thence working to conclusions, but that process one which either they can not or will not explain—that he would not give up the matter without a painful and close investigation. He could discover nothing, however, of the least moment. For every one of the chiefs asserted positively, and in terms which admitted of no qualification, that no tidings had been received in any manner of the Bald-Eagle since the night of his departure, that they had no suspicion where he was, whither he had

gone, or what detained him so late at a distance from the hunting-grounds of the tribe, and that, too, at a season when it might be confidently expected that a few more days at farthest would bring snow, and a week or two longer would close up the lakes and rivers with icy chains, indissoluble until the return of spring. Still they all stuck religiously to their opinion, although they could give no earthly reason for their entertaining it. "That may be he very much near-by—may be come to-morrow—may be next day." Nor did one of them fail to assert his belief that "Something bad not far off—may be bad Indian coming." It was useless, of course, to argue with them, and, in fact, the Jesuit was so much struck by the unanimity and pertinacity with which they held fast to their belief, that he felt no inclination to argue them out of it, but rather encouraged them to keep a good look-out, and even advised the setting of a nightly-watch, the distribution of the arms and ammunition to the brethren and lay-brothers, and even the loading of the wall-pieces nightly, precautions which had not for a long period been adopted, such perfect peace and tranquillity had ever existed in the neighborhood of the society, but which he now justified by admitting his strong suspicion that the Indians had in reality discovered some signs or tracks which told them of peril at hand, although they did not choose to disclose the sources of information.

A certain restless and uneasy feeling had circulated therefore among the order, which really would seem often to be the harbinger and precursor of great events. The gates were secured regularly, and watches planted and relieved at sunset, and throughout the hours of darkness. The brothers slept with weapons and ammunition ready to their hands, and never went out even to work in the fields without arms slung at their backs; and yet, well entrenched, well supplied with provisions and water, for there was a well within the precincts of the

fort, well armed, well garrisoned, and, above all, provided with artillery, which the Indians held in great awe, they had little apprehension and less doubt of beating off any attack, should one be made; the more so that the season was so late that it would scarcely be possible for an enemy to keep the field after another month.

After some days of this wild suspense, on a dark and stormy night in the early part of November, not very long after the gates had been closed, all the dogs of the garrison began to bay fiercely, and then to howl most lugubriously, although there was no moon to excite them, nor any sounds that reached the ears of the sentinels. Not long afterward, however, a dripping sound, as if from a paddle incautiously and rapidly wielded, was heard from the river, and was immediately succeeded by a yell so startling and long-drawn, that all who heard it were assured at the instant, that some tidings of strange import were at hand; and in less time than it takes to describe it, the whole community was mustered and under arms, in expectation of I know not what terrible and disastrous tidings. Within a minute or two such a burst was heard from the Indian camp of savage cries and whoops, that it was very certain that something of note had occurred. In a moment the whole village was afoot, fire-brands were gleaming in all directions, and it was soon apparent that the Indians were striking their tents, and dismantling their more permanent abodes of all their valuables, which they were hastily embarking on board their canoes as if by one consent. A minute or two afterward a light was seen crossing the river, the splash of paddles was heard, and four or five well-known Indians, all chiefs of rank, came up the walk to the palisades, with light-wood brands and weapons in their hands, asking immediate entrance. "Bald-Eagle come," said the principle speaker.

"Bring heap news, let in quick, I tell you, not very much time to lose."

The gates were thrown open quickly, and certainly there stood the Bald-Eagle, and in very different plight from that in which he had set forth. He was unarmed all but his knife, and the lock and barrel of his broken carbine. His hair was clotted with blood which had flowed from two or three gashes in his head, and blood was oozing from two or three rents in his buckskin hunting-shirt; he looked fagged, too, and way-worn, but he did not seem broken or disheartened. His story was brief, but alarming. Returning from a successful hunt down the north shores of the lake, which he had coasted so far down as to where Sarnia now stands at the commencement of the river St. Clair, when within fifteen miles of home, loaded with peltry, he had been surprised, when expecting nothing less, by a party of Ojibwas, out upon a war-path, as he knew from their being in their war-paint, and was taken without resistance, for to resist such numbers would have been in vain, since they numbered, he said, no less than thirty war-canoes, with not less than eight or ten warriors to each, and he estimated their force at not much less than three hundred men, well-armed, at least two thirds of them carrying muskets of English manufacture. Their very numbers, he added, had rendered them careless, and he had contrived to make his escape, though not without a sharp struggle with an out-lying party, and had come on with all speed to warn the good fathers of the coming peril, and to bring them his arm to aid in the strife. The enemy would be upon them, he added, early in the morning, and he advised the mustering of the whole tribe within the fort, where he was confident that they could easily repulse the enemy, and hold them at bay until such time as cold and want should compel them to decamp. He further recommended the sending out of the sacramental-plate under

the care of some trusty person, who should bury it on some of the islands, and conceal himself anywhere he best might on the northwestern shore, or up the river Severn, as it was certain that the Ojibwas would trust themselves no farther to the northward at this season, and as they were only actuated in their attack by the desire of gaining that rich booty.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASSACRE.

WHILE the Bald-Eagle was speaking, Father Borromèè never withdrew his searching eyes for one instant from his face, and when he had ended he subjected him to a close cross-examination, for he very grievously suspected him, but he succeeded in eliciting nothing, and it was not to be doubted that an enemy was at hand, since he could have no possible object in the invention of a falsehood which must be discovered within a few hours. By this time, the whole tribe of the Iroquois were at the gates imploring admittance for themselves, their children, their wives, and their baggage, and as the good faith of the tribe in general was not to be doubted any more than the fact that they were engaged in deadly hostilities with the Ojibwas, they were of course instantly admitted, the women and children as guests, and in some degree as hostages, the men as trusty and valorous allies.

The father Borromèè took advantage of this diversion to dismiss the chiefs under the care of the refectioner and the brother who acted as chirurgéon, desiring the latter in the Iroquois tongue to attend carefully to the hurts of the Bald-Eagle, and adding a few words in Spanish directing him to delay his

operations as much as possible, and by no means to permit him to get abroad within an hour. When they were once gone he proceeded to take counsel with the president, and though he did not hesitate to express his belief that the Bald-Eagle was a traitor, and in collusion with the enemy, and that the advice given was for his own advantage, he still believed it the best to be taken. "Doubtless, he expected," the Jesuit said, "to be employed himself in the matter, in which case he would have at once given the spoil up to the Ojibwas, and after disclosing to them our line of defence, betrayed us by some cunning treason. But we will frustrate him," he added. "If you will suffer me to go forth, father, on this mission, I will take with me only the 'Little Bear,' whom I know for a trusty and faithful Indian, and the girl Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, who can converse with me in Italian, and by whom I may communicate with the Ojibwas if need be. The plate and treasures I will bury below the water-mark on the east end of the giant's grave, on a due east line from the largest pine I can find, and a white stone which I will set up on the shore. So shall you find it if aught of evil befall me. If God grant me to return in life, I will enter by the secret passage into the stone-tower to-morrow night at half an hour before moon-rise; so that three or four of the trustiest of the brothers to hold the door in hand and admit me at the signal. For the rest, resist stoutly, put no trust in the Bald-Eagle, let him not stir a yard without one of the brethren at his elbow, and shoot him dead on the instant if he attempt to communicate with the enemy, or do aught savoring in the least of treason. By God's grace, we will frustrate this knave's treachery, until by means of the maiden we may make firm peace with the enemy, which I by no means despair of. Now give me thy blessing, father, and speed me on my way, for by Heaven's aid, right sure am I that this will be the better way."

Some little opposition was made, on the pretended score of unwillingness to expose so eminent and valuable a life to such cruel risk, but in reality, because, knowing him to be the best, the bravest, and the ablest leader of the whole order, they wanted his presence within so sorely that they held themselves barely able to dispense with it. His urgency, however, and the necessity of the case prevailed, and he received the permission he required, and the persons he had selected as his companions. To the girl alone was the object of their expedition intrusted, and she was appointed the bearer, with the Jesuit's aid, of the coffer in which the relics and plate of the order were secured. The young chief was content to follow a leader whom he loved and revered so deeply as the father Borromèe, in blind obedience to his will, without inquiring wherefore or whither, and had he doubted, the present which he received before setting forth of a beautifully-finished Spanish-barrelled carabine, with horn and pouch to correspond, and a fine German hunting-knife with a buck-horn hilt, would have hired him to follow any leader even to the gates of the tomb.

The Jesuit himself laid aside his robes, and appeared clad from head to foot in a suit of fine buckskin accurately fitting his fine form, and displaying a port and stature certainly better fitted for a warrior than for a monk, to its best advantage. His arms were superb, and by the way he handled them it was clear that he well knew how to use them. They consisted of a long Spanish-barrelled gun, with the newly-invented wheel-lock, two brace of ten-inch German pistols, a curved yataghan of Damascus steel swinging on his left thigh, a stout Toledo dagger in his belt, and an axe swung by the belt which supported the horn and bullet-pouch across his shoulders. Even Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng, proud to be selected from all her tribe for such a duty, carried her bow and quiver, and thus equipped, bearing the heavy coffer between them, they

issued from a secret wicket in the back of the palisades, opening upon the brook and ravine, along the course of which they crept stealthily to its outlet into the river, whither the girl soon paddled down a canoe from the wharf, unseen and unsuspected, when they all embarked and dropped so silently down the current, that they had been gone an hour before their departure was discovered by any one, and then it was only detected on the Bald-Eagle's coming forth from the refectory, when he perceived the absence of the Little-Bear, and soon after found that the father Borromeè was not to be seen that evening, whence he at once suspected what had occurred, though even then he overlooked the departure of the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind, whom he believed to be somewhere within the buildings of the Mission. His first impulse was to leave the fort and follow on their trail, but egress being peremptorily refused to him, he saw at once that he was himself suspected, and resigned himself with Indian stoicism to what he knew must be, exulting inwardly in the sure triumph of his iniquitous and treasonable schemes.

Before they had been missed within the fort, their canoe had passed the mouth of the river, and entered the labyrinth of shoals and shallows, overgrown with a luxuriant crop of wild-rice, rising to a height of at least six feet above the surface, and intersected with many narrow navigable channels, which are one of the peculiar features of the streams which debouch into the lower end of the great Georgian bay. Here their peril may be said to have commenced fairly, for from this point onward they might at any moment fall upon the fleet of their enemies, but they had concluded, and as it fell out, concluded wisely, that the Ojibwas being in such overwhelming force, would scarcely hurry or attempt any forced surprise, when they were assured, as the Jesuit never doubted that they were assured, of treacherous aid from within the fort. He

judged, therefore, that they would encamp for the night, on the western side of some of the many islets where their fires would not be visible at the mouth of the Wye. He caused his boat on this principle to be kept away into a deep bight of the mainland on the left of the mouth of the river as you come down, and running close along the coast within the shadows of shore, until he reached and doubled a bold headland opening a deep bay indenting the land to the southward, from which point of view he soon discovered no less than five watch-fires, burning on the southwestern point of what is now known as Present island, and by the aid of a small perspective-glass, which he had brought with him, easily discerned the figures of many savages moving and sitting around the blaze, and interposing their dusky forms between his eye and the light.

His plan was now taken on the instant, or rather was decided, for it was that on which he had from the first determined; paddling as rapidly as he could into the deep bay, he soon reached the rice-swamp which filled the bottom along the shores, and after a little examination, struck the mouth of a deep, narrow, sluggish stream which fell into it; up this with some labor they forced the canoe, until they reached the land, which was overspread with a gigantic forest of tall hemlocks, mingled with deciduous trees, and traversed by an Indian trace, for there was a portage hence to the neighboring bay, now the harbor of Penetanguishine, by which several miles of distance can be saved in rounding the northern headland and working their way southwardly. Here the canoe was taken out of water, and the Indian balancing it easily upon his shoulder, walked off through the woods at his usual swinging trot, followed by the priest, who, besides being encumbered with his own arms and those of the Indian, was almost overloaded with the ponderous coffer, and by the girl, who bore the paddles, a shovel or two which had been brought along in the canoe.

About half an hour's walking brought them to the farther end of the portage, upon the narrow and limpid basin of Penetanguishine, now the site of a flourishing village, with British barracks and a naval station, but then the desolate and unfrequented wilderness.

Here they lighted a small fire, in a deep hollow, surrounded with underwood, which sheltered them entirely from view, and eating a scanty meal of cooked provisions which they had brought along with them, wrapped themselves in their blankets and slept, or seemed to sleep through the night unmolested. But the Jesuit slept not, but lay pondering on the perils of his comrades, now almost fearing that his advice had not been the wisest, and that their true policy would have been to have deserted the fort for the moment after *caching* their valuables, and to have run up northwardly along the shores, where the Ojibwas would not dare to follow them. It was, however, obviously too late to repent, and though he could not sleep, he lay and rested himself until the stars paled in the sky to the eastward, and a faint dappling of the heavens announced the coming of another day. Then he arose, and bidding his companions prepare the canoe and get everything aboard, while he himself hurried back to the other end of the portage to take one final observation of the Indians, and when there he perceived them, as he expected, with their barks already afloat and steering directly across the bay for the embouchure of the Wye, a fact which confirmed him fully of the treason of the Bald-Eagle, since but for his information, it was impossible that the strange savages could have so speedily discovered the mouth of the river they sought. Filled with grievous and sad forebodings he now hastened back to his companions, and telling them nothing of his fears, for he was resolved at all risks after burying the treasure to return to his brethren, and if necessary die with them, and feared some opposition from the Little-Bear,

entered the birch canoe, steered down the placid inlet of Penetanguishine, and thence re-entering the main waters of the great Georgian bay, laid her course to the south-westward for the truncated cone, shaped much like a steeple-crowned hat, of the puritanic form, which was then and is to this day known as the Giant's Grave. This conspicuous islet they reached long before noon, and mooring the canoe to a paddle driven into the extremity of a gravelly shoal at the eastern end of the island, they laid aside their arms, and taking the shovels, the coffer, and a white boulder-stone which they had brought with them from the last landing-place, and ascertaining the exact place designated by the Jesuit, soon effected the concealment of the treasure, beneath the gravel and beneath the water itself, and that done, carefully and effectually removing all traces of their temporary visit to the island mound, they betook themselves homeward by the same way that they had come, reached the shelter of the woods of Penetanguishine at an early hour of the afternoon, and there reposed and finished their small stock of provisions, until the gathering gloom of evening should render it safe for them to return safely to the camp, and seek to re-enter it. In those short days evening soon came, and it had hardly spread its dark mantle over the earth, calling the nocturnal tribes of birds and insects into life and motion, before they were again upon the waters, steering toward the well-known mouth of the familiar river.

One thing, however, had greatly shaken the confidence of the priest; for some hours of the time during which they had lain perdu in the woods nigh to Penetanguishine, the roar of the artillery from the fort had been almost continuous, telling of a sharp attack and stout resistance, and at times even the rolling rattle of the volleyed musketry had been distinctly audible. On a sudden the roar and rattle had sunk at once, and all was hushed and still—alas, his foreboding heart!—was hushed

and still for ever—all save the groans of agony, all save the yells of the frantic torturers, all save the booming of the terrible death-drums, and the appalling cadences of the scalp-whoop and the death-halloo. By the time the moon was within a little space of rising, the priest had landed on the northern headland of the Wye, obedient to his promise, and after dismissing the Indian, and bidding him look to his own safety for he feared the worst was already over, he took his way accompanied by the girl, who refused to leave him, maintaining that she was in no danger from her own tribesmen, to the familiar fort through the lone woodlands.

When he reached the spot, his worst fears were indeed realized. The mouth of the secret passage was forced violently open, and it was evident that through it, detected of course by the Bald-Eagle before his departure, the entrance of the enemies had been affected. A few steps more brought him to a full view of the hideous scene of massacre and torture, but the last act save one of the dread tragedy was completed. The last save one of the brethren had sealed the testimony of his faith with his innocent and pious blood; a scathed pile and a heap of ashes, interspersed with a few human bones, were the sole monuments of their dreadful doom; and long stood there erect and grisly, mute evidences of the spot where the Jesuits endured all the protracted horrors of the Indian torture, and died invoking not vengeance, but peace and pardon on their persecutors.

“Domine nunc dimittis,” groaned the Jesuit, as he looked on the dreadful sight. “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant to depart in peace;” and with a loud, clear voice he exclaimed, “Fratres benedicite,” his wonted salutation to his tribes-men, and strode forward with uplifted arms from the shadows of the forest into the open area, which was still lighted by the embers of the death-fires, around which the Indians were sitting,

wearied and worn out with the exhaustion of the past excitement. At this strange apparition many of them started to their feet in wonder nigh akin to fear. But the Bald-Eagle recognised him at once, and leaping forward with a wild whoop of triumph, seized him unresisting by the collar and dragged him rudely forward. "This is the chief," he cried, "this is the chief-medicine—the evil-spirit of them all. Away with him, brothers, to the stake. He is the seducer, too, of your tribeswoman, Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng. To the stake with him."

But as he spoke the girl herself glided forward and stood at his elbow.

"It is a lie," she said. "It is a lie of the Iroquois. The daughter of Chingwauk, the sister of Chingwaukonce, is no castaway—never seduced. It is a lie, cowardly Huron Buzzard, Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng is white as the snow in winter. That for your lie, foul traitor Huron!" and as she spoke, she plunged a small knife at a single blow into the heart of the traitor, that he dropped dead at her feet without a word or sign. Then she flung the bloody knife into the circle, and cried in her clear silver tones. "Blood for the honor of the Ojibwa girl. Death to the liar and the traitor. Father, brother, has the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind done well?"

A loud acclamation carried an assent to her words, and she was instantly greeted by the kinsmen, and installed in her lost station, as the daughter of the great chief, worthy of all distinction and respect; but no prayers, no arguments, no entreaties of hers could win the pardon of the Jesuit. He was tortured so felly, that the very manner of his death has come down to these days by direct oral tradition of the perpetrators. Necklaces of red-hot axe-heads were hung about his neck, girdles about his loins, till when his body was literally well nigh burnt in twain, his living heart was ripped out of his bosom,

and flung palpitating in his face, while his agonized lips still quivered with the last notes of the "De Profundis clamavi." He died in his middle age, a true and undaunted soldier of the church; as he had battled in his youth true and undaunted soldier of his king. His race was run, his duty done. Honor to his memory, peace to his ashes!

From that day never more did the Reed-shaken-by-the-wind lift her gentle head, but faded like a flower withered by the fierce noonday sun. Like Iago, word she never spoke more, but wandered mute and almost bereaved of reason around the pile at which her teacher, her friend, and her savior, had died in anguish intolerable, yet endured with the triumphant faith and fortitude of a Christian martyr, and a French cavalier, until death relieved her, too, of the burthen and the weariness of too long life.

On the following day the Little-Bear was captured and slain, and with him perished the secret of the concealed treasures. They are sought for often by both the Indians and the whites, but never have been found, nor is it probable ever will be, since the sole record of them exists in this veracious legend, and even so the boulder has been swept away, the pine-tree has perished with age, and the place of the interment may be held lost for ever.

Before the springtime returned with its flowers, the "Reed-shaken-by-the-wind" slept by the banks of that fair river which had so long afforded her a happy home among the good French Jesuits. Myself, I have sat oftentimes on the low mound which marks her resting-place, and have fancied as I heard the wild wind mournfully rustling through the wild-rice beds, that it murmured the soft accents of her name — Ahsahgunushk Numamahtahseng.

The race of the Iroquois has vanished from the earth, their memory preserved alone by the pits which contain their bones

scattered through the wild woods. Their language is no more heard in their old places, for the Ojibwas dwell where they dwelt of yore, and all that remains to give evidence concerning the fall of the old French fort, is this humble record, and the holy Christian creed which they professed, and which in after-days their very murderers adopted. *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*

The life of man is grass, and is cut down in a day and perisheth before the evening star; the Truth of God is eternal, and endureth for ever and ever.

THE END.



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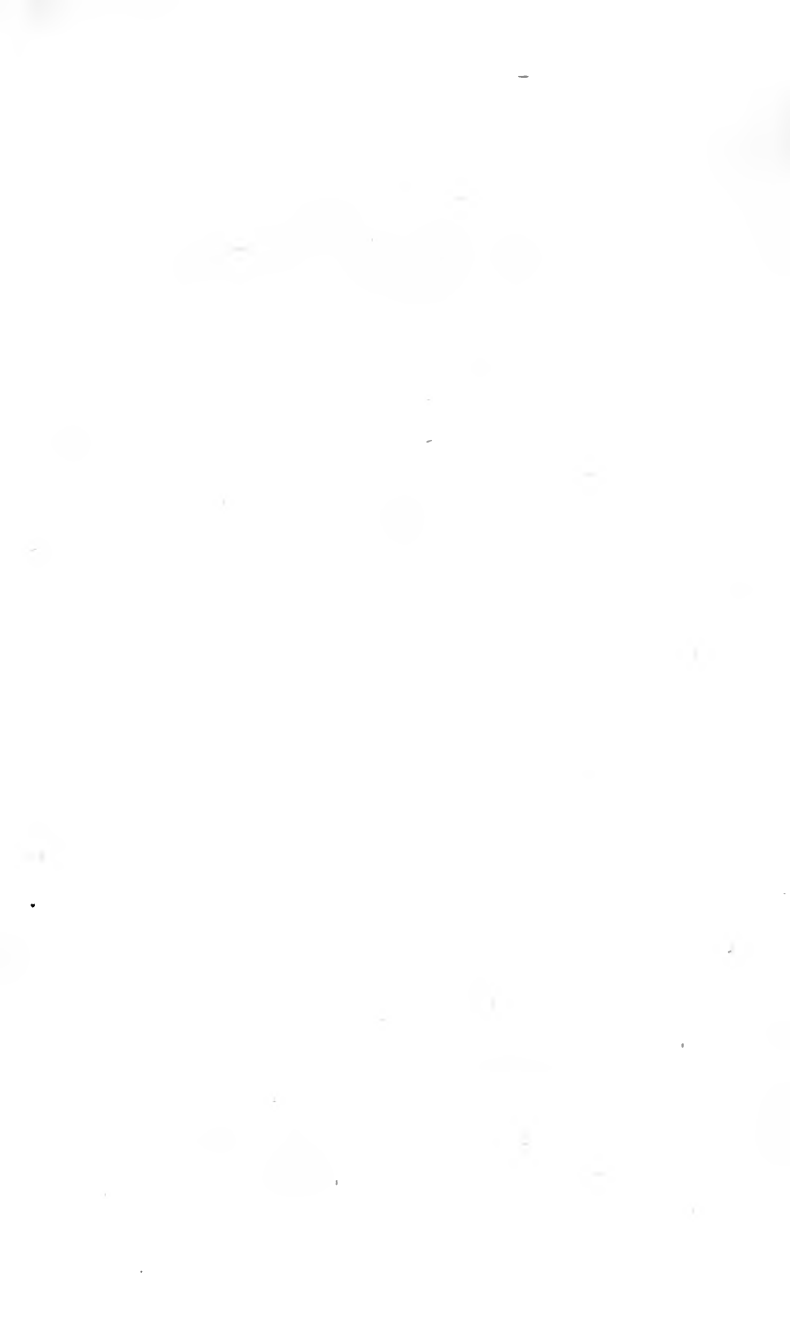
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